

## Questions of the Bluemont Civic Association on the Missing Middle Phase 2 Report

### **Technical questions**

1. At the May 3 online meeting, you showed a slide 31 with information on the relationship between units and square footage allowed, but the report on the web site ends at slide 29. Is there an updated report?

**The presentation on the Missing Middle [webpage](#) has been updated to include the requested slide. The slide showing the relationship between units and square footage allowed is slide 14.b.**

2. The report states “minimum canopy requirements set by state code would be 10% or 15%, compared to 20% minimum for single detached.” (Slide 23) Given that the state code sets a lower minimum for “missing middle” housing, isn’t it likely that if lots are redeveloped with that housing rather than single detached, tree canopy will be reduced? How do you propose that effect be offset?

**The Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP), which is currently in development, may have insights on this point. It is anticipated that the draft FNRP will be out for community review later this year.**

3. You estimated that the net increase in school enrollment would be 9 - 13 students per year. Could you share that calculation with us?

**From p.26 of the [Comment/Response Matrix](#):**

**Arlington Public Schools (APS) projects that the Draft Framework would result in a net increase of 5 to 7 elementary students, 2 middle school students, and 2 to 4 high school students (total 9 to 13 K-12 students) per year. This estimate is based on the consultants’ estimated pace of housing growth applying APS’s Fall 2021 Countywide student generation rates for different housing types ([Fall 2021 Enrollment Projections Report, see Attachment C](#)). Because there are very few buildings with 3-8 housing units in Arlington, the student generation rates for market-rate garden apartments and garden condominiums were used for these housing types. Additional response: The net increase in student generation is based on an increase of 18 to 22 students living in the estimated 94 to 108 missing middle housing units built per year. This increase would be offset by a decrease of 9 students estimated for the 19 to 21 single-detached houses that are redeveloped, resulting in a net increase of 9 to 13 students per year. APS considers projected changes in school enrollment and capital projects to accommodate these changes through regular updates to its Arlington Facilities and Student Accommodation Plan and Capital Improvement Plan.**

4. The sample floor plans in the technical report are helpful but can be hard to make sense of. Could you provide 3-D renderings of potential new MMH building types, and comparable single-family types currently allowed, for comparison?

No further graphics are available.

5. Have you considered how housing prices will change in the next few years?

**It is difficult to predict how prices will change in the future. It is likely that housing prices will continue to rise due to the relative short supply and continuing attractiveness of the Washington, DC metro area job market. However, the impact of rising interest rates, if sustained, could slow the rate of increase compared to recent years of low interest rates.**

6. You have found that a number of factors will limit the amount of missing middle housing built in response to the change in zoning. Have you considered whether those factors will continue to limit missing middle housing five years from now? Ten years from now?

**As builders become more familiar with the construction of Missing Middle housing types, and a market is developed, a greater percentage of the teardown lots may be redeveloped with Missing Middle housing. At the same time, there may be a diminishing supply of lots with teardown potential (where the size and cost would allow sufficient profit for the teardown builder).**

## **Parking**

1. You suggested a parking requirement of .5 spaces per unit. Does that count on street parking?

**No. The minimum requirement is .5 off-street spaces per unit.**

How did you arrive at that figure?

**The standard parking requirement in “R” zones, with some exceptions, is 1 parking space per unit. In evaluating Missing Middle housing types and balancing County policies and community concerns, staff has included a parking requirement of .5 spaces per unit, which is responsive to concerns regarding lot coverage, tree canopy, and stormwater management. Setting a parking minimum does not preclude the builder from providing more parking, subject to lot coverage and stormwater management requirements. Builders will likely consider proximity/access to transit and on-street availability in deciding what is most marketable for each site.**

2. Have you estimated the number of cars likely owned by the residents of missing middle housing of each size?

**According to MWCOG’s 2017/2018 Household Travel Survey Report, 51% of Arlington households have only one vehicle, and 12% have no vehicles. It is likely that households with multiple vehicles will not choose housing options that do not meet that need, and different housing opportunities in different locations may trigger different decisions about car ownership.**

3. Have you estimated the needs of senior citizens for parking? Those needs may exceed those of other residents.

**A .5 minimum parking requirement does not preclude a builder from creating more parking on the site, subject to lot coverage and stormwater management requirements.**

4. It seems from Table A-8 of the PES report that most of the new missing middle housing will not be Metro accessible. Do you propose the same parking limit for that housing?  
**The Draft Framework has one parking requirement for all sites. Sites that are close to transit may be able to capitalize on the transit access and residents may not be as car dependent. Sites that are further away from transit may have more on-street parking availability.**

### ***Inclusiveness and Options***

5. You have examined what additional missing middle housing would be built after the change in zoning. Have you considered the suitability of that housing for senior citizens? Many of the units seem to involve a lot of stairs.

**There would be single floorunits at ground level in most multi-unit buildings. Further, the Fair Housing Act requires accessible design and construction standards for ground floor units in all multi-family buildings that contain four or more units.**

6. Table 4 of the Partners for Economic Solutions (PES) report indicates the bulk of units in the additional missing middle housing will be less than 1300 square feet. How does that compare to the size of apartments going up in the new apartment buildings being built in Arlington?

**New apartments in high rise development tend to be smaller, about 900 square feet on average. One consideration for the MMHS is encouraging modest family-sized units (2-4 BR), which typically does not happen with high rise development because of higher per-square-foot construction costs.**

7. Would the new options offered by missing middle housing primarily be apartments very similar to those that are primarily being constructed now? (According to slide 7, “Arlington’s new housing construction is primarily 1- to 2- bedroom homes in high-rise apartments along commercial corridors and 5- to 6-bedroom replacement homes in single household neighborhoods”)

**See above. Also, more modest-sized units that could be built under the draft framework would provide more options in neighborhoods where this type of housing is not allowed. This could provide options for younger household to live near family members, or allow older adults to remain in their current neighborhood if they choose to down-size.**

8. According to slide 19, “Based on the financial feasibility and study of other jurisdictions, only approximately 20 lots per year would become “missing middle” (94 -108 units)” Based on that and Table A-8 of the PES report, would it be fair to say that the additional missing middle housing would average around 5 units a building and would almost all have 4 units or more?

**It would be more accurate to say that 2-8 units would be permitted, and builders may choose to build different housing types. Due to variations in lot size and market demand/feasibility, a range of housing types is expected. The study consultants have provided an estimate, considering that some housing types are more familiar to builders (townhouse, duplex) while other housing types could be more profitable, if built (6-plex, 8-plex).**

9. A number of large apartment buildings are being built in Arlington. Did you consider ways to get these new complexes to include more family-friendly apartments?  
**The County does not have the authority to mandate or dictate unit size or unit mix. Developers build what can be financed, which, in most cases is what sells or leases within an acceptable time period to meet their financial obligations. Because of the County’s involvement in financing committed affordable housing, the County has more influence to encourage family sized units, in line with County policy, than it does with market-rate developers.**

10. Slide 24 suggests that “Households who need smaller housing options (1-3 bedrooms)” would benefit from more missing middle housing. Wouldn’t it follow that people who need larger housing options would suffer?  
**No. The market currently produces larger new single-detached (4-6BR) housing.**

11. Slide 7 indicates that Arlington has significant construction of one- and two-bedroom options in new apartment buildings. How much of the missing middle housing that is to be built would have three bedrooms?

**See question 3 on Page 1 above. Preliminarily, the consultant’s analysis shows that, at first, more multi-unit buildings would be constructed than duplexes or townhouses, based on relative profitability.**

12. Slide 24 says that” MMH could be attainable to up to 39% of Black or African American households, 39% of Hispanic or Latino households, and 60% of Asian households in the Washington metro area” Could you share the calculation that produced that result with us?
- To what share of white households would MMH be attainable?
  - To what share of Black or African American households, Hispanic or Latino households, Asian households and White households would single family homes be attainable?

Based on consultant’s expected sales prices or rents of newly constructed missing middle housing, households with incomes as low as \$108,000 would be able to attain the lowest cost housing options (likely units within 6-plexes or 8-plexes). Staff compared this level of attainability to the percent of households in the Washington metro area at that income level, broken out by the race/ethnicity of the householder (2020 5-Year American Community Estimates).

The lowest cost missing middle housing options under the draft framework would be attainable to 62% of white (not Hispanic or Latino) households.

The median sales price for a single-detached house in Arlington is \$1.1 million. The household income needed to attain housing at this price is approximately \$250,000, assuming a 20% down payment. The American Community Survey does not include income brackets above \$200,000. The percentage of households in the Washington metro area with incomes greater than \$200,000 are shown in the table below.

| Race/Ethnicity of Householder | % of Households with Incomes \$200,000 or more |
|-------------------------------|--|
| White, not Hispanic or Latino | 26%  |
| Black or African American     | 10%  |
| Hispanic or Latino            | 11%  |
| Asian                         | 25%  |

- Are there other County financial or administrative measures that could be considered which might reduce the extra costs, complexities and market uncertainties that are anticipated to limit MMH building activity? The anticipated very limited (only about 20 lots per year) construction of MMH housing seems to imply that if the County wants to achieve its stated goals of meaningfully expanding housing choices and addressing current housing inequity then more measures will be needed.

**From the Question/Response Matrix (q. O1-O5) No incentives are being offered at this time. The consultant’s analysis indicates that the return on investment for missing middle housing development, in some instances, would be higher than a typical replacement detached home. Builders will have to weigh potential additional profit against additional risk (unfamiliar building type(s)/complexity, additional project costs, etc.). Despite the additional risk, the consultant team believes there will be some interest in building Missing Middle housing.**

***Teardown phenomenon***

- The sizes and prices of new single-family residences that are currently permitted by the existing Zoning Ordinance are considered by many residents to be excessive and seem to contribute to overall increased imperviousness, tree canopy loss and changes in

community character. Saying that the proposed MMH housing can be the same size, height and coverage as the jumbo-sized new single-family houses may not be desirable. Will there be serious consideration given to Zoning Ordinance changes that may reduce the maximum size of new single-family buildings within R-5 and R-6 districts?

- a. If so, when will that study take place and how might it affect the proposals in the MMH framework?

**Staff has identified this as a concern which could be addressed through a follow-on study. Exact timing of such a study is dependent on the Planning Division's work plan, which is coordinated through review with the County Board annually.**

15. There are references to "expected viable lot sizes" of 8,000, 12, 000 and 15,000 square feet, yet most of Arlington's single-family lots are zoned R-5 and R-6 with actual lots averaging below 7,000 square feet. Unless there is an expectation of lot consolidation and re-subdivision there seems to be a mismatch. Shouldn't appropriate building types and their sizes be based upon the existing predominant lot sizes in Arlington?

From the [FAQs](#):

**Would it be possible to combine lots to build a larger development?**

**The draft framework proposes to maintain the same single-detached main building footprint standards for missing middle housing. Lot consolidation would not be prohibited, but it may not be likely due to these maximum building footprint requirements. Because of these requirements, a builder can almost always build more total square footage on two lots than on a single lot.**

**In review of development over the past ten years, staff could not find an example of two houses being torn down and replaced with a single house. In a small number of cases, a vacant lot was combined with an adjacent single-detached lot to create a larger lot for a larger replacement house. The proposed limitations on townhouses to groups of three units would also likely discourage lot consolidation.**

**Additional Response:**

**There is no mismatch between existing lots in Arlington and the expected viable lot size for different housing types. Arlington has a wide range of R-zoned lots, from older, smaller lots that pre-date zoning and minimum lot sizes to very large lots that exceed the minimum lot size for their zone. Some existing lots, particularly those in R-10 and R-20 zones with minimum lot size requirements of 10,000 and 20,000 square feet, are large enough to accommodate housing types such as a townhouses (up to 3 units) or small multiplexes (up to 8 units) while maintaining the same height, setback, and lot coverage standards as a single-detached house.**