

On May 29, the County hosted its Community Kick-Off for the Housing Arlington initiative. Approximately 110 community members took part in the kick-off event itself, conversing with staff at 11 different stations set up to inform the community of various Housing tools and efforts currently underway, as well as listening to ideas and opinions that community members brought to the table.

An online feedback form that mirrored the various station feedback was held open for the following month (until June 28) and that form garnered additional participation. In all, 447 community members gave feedback in this online portion of the Housing Arlington initiative kick-off (though each respondent had the option to answer only those questions which were most important to them, so total responses to individual questions may vary).

The following report summarizes key ideas and emerging themes from that online feedback. Complete responses to all open-ended questions can be found in the Appendix, organized by section and theme as seen below.

Demographics

Several demographic questions were asked of participants, determining their housing situation, civic association and CA participation, and whether or not they were Arlington residents. This demographic data is not cross-tabulated with other responses but does give a sense of who was giving feedback.

Arlington Resident?

Yes – 436

No – 11*

*The few respondents who were not Arlington residents lived mostly very close to Arlington's borders (Fairfax, Alexandria, and one DC resident) and suggested interest in living in Arlington.

Rent or Own

447- Responses

360 – Home Owner

83 – Renter

4 – Family of Home Owner

1 – Both Own and Rent

Civic Associations Represented

Alcova Heights-53

Arlington Forest-29

Arlington Heights-5
Arlington Mill-3
Arlington Ridge-5
Arlington View-2
Arlington-East Falls Church-10
Ashton Heights-7
Aurora Highlands-7
Ballston-Virginia Square-21
Barcroft-17
Bellevue Forest-1
Bluemont-20
Boulevard Manor-2
Buckingham-3
Chain Bridge Forest-1
Cherrydale-10
Claremont-13
Clarendon-Courthouse-9
Colonial Village-2
Colombia Forest-4
Columbia Heights-16
Crystal City-9
Dominion Hills-1
Donaldson Run-29
Douglas Park-11
Fairlington-10
Forest Glen 2
GlebeWood- 1
Glencarlyn-4
Highland Park-Overlee Knolls-5
John M. Langston-1
Leeway Overlee-5

Lyon Park-11
Lyon Village-8
Madison Manner-5
Maywood-2
Nauck-8
North Highlands-2
North Rosslyn-4
Old Dominion-2
Old Glebe-4
Penrose-8
Radnor/Ft. Meyer Heights-4
Riverwood-1
Rock Springs-5
Shirlington-7
Stafford Albemarle-2
Tara-Leeway Heights-8
Waverly Hills-6
Waycroft-Woodlawn-2
Westover Village-7
Williamsburg-10
Yorktown-11

The Civic Associations represented in this feedback showed a wide spread throughout the county geographically and including nearly every Civic Association in Arlington.

General Reflections

Following demographic information, a series of open ended questions were asked to garner general reflections from participants on their overall housing situations. The major themes of those comments are identified below. [The full comments can be found in the XSL spreadsheet]

What are some of the housing challenges you or members of your family face now or possibly in the future?

(Appendix P.93)

Affordability-133

Aging in Place- 30

Rising Taxes-29

Rental Increases-24

Housing stock-21

What other ideas or issues should we consider or be concerned about as we discuss the future of housing in Arlington?

(Appendix P.60)

Affordability-37

Zoning-32

Location of Affordable Housing-23

Middle Income-20

School Capacity-20

Density-15

Multi-Family-12

Taxes-11

Transportation-11

Tree Protection-11

Public/Open Space-9

Parking-7

Rent Control-7

Infrastructure-4

What additional comments do you have on the future of housing in Arlington?

(Appendix P.120)

42- Affordable Housing

26- Location of Affordable Housing

17-Density

16- Middle Income

14- Zoning

9- Schools

7-Single Family Homes

5-Diversity

5-Infrastructure

5-Housing Stock

Land Use Tools

The following information, was gathered from a series of open ended questions to garner general reflections from participants to help guide future housing development in Arlington. The major comments received are identified below. [The full comments can be found in the XSL spreadsheet]

How Important is it to increase the supply of housing units on Arlington County?

(TBD CPHD?)

It is very important-157

It is not important-122

It's fairly important-59

It might not be important-46

Not sure-25

By a fairly narrow margin, respondents felt that increasing the supply of housing units held some importance (with 216 saying it was fairly or very important and 168 saying it wasn't or might not be important), and many noted that this objective needed to be balanced with others (preservation of open space, school capacity prominent among those concerns).

How Important is it that we create a greater variety of housing choices across Arlington County?

(TBD CPHD?)

It's not important-105

It might be important-47

It's fairly important-65

Not Sure-18

Other – 24

No more accessory dwellings

What type of housing could you envision you or someone in your family living in at some point in your lifetime?*

(TBD CPHD?)

Town homes-236

Mid-Rise Apartment/Condo- 197

Duplex-150

High-Rise Apartment-143

Bungalow Courts-127

Triplex/Four-plex-114

Accessory Dwellings-105

Live/Work Unit-64

**** A number of respondents complained (both here and in the following open-ended question) that “Single Family Homes” was not one of the choices in this question.**

MISSING MIDDLE: There are several kinds of missing middle housing (accessory dwelling, duplex, fourplex, townhouse, midrise multifamily, courtyard complex). Which types of missing middle housing are the best fits for different Arlington neighborhoods?

The “Missing Middle” question was open-ended reflection of what types of housing belong in what parts of the county. This question received a wide-array of responses. Many people responded generally that their answers would change depending on which neighborhood was considered, while some noted that it was important to consider an equitable spread of tools across all areas of the county. A strong minority of responses noted that they felt Arlington’s primary goal should be to protect its single-family home neighborhoods and “suburban” feel, and to slow down or stop growing density.

Of those who identified specific housing types that should be used to help the “missing middle” the majority identified generally lower density tools – specifically townhomes, bungalows, and duplexes. Garden and courtyard apartments also garnered support while mid-rise and high-rise buildings saw some support.

There was an almost exact split of opinions expressed on Accessory Dwellings as ten people opposed the use of ADUs to address the missing middle while thirteen identified this as a tool they would like to see used.

(Appendix P.30)

81- Lower Density Tools

52 - Protect Single Family/No more density

37 – Use all Tools

35 -- Neighborhood Dependent

27 -- Use no Tools

- 19 – Biased question
- 18 – Medium Density Tools
- 18 – Use Transit Corridors/Current Density plan
- 15 -- Geographic Diversity
- 14 – Lower to Medium Density Tools
- 4 -- Higher Density Tools

Specific Breakdown:

- 57 - Townhomes
- 57 – Single Family Homes
- 49 – Duplex
- 29 – Fourplex
- 27- Accessory Dwelling Units
- 26 – Garden/Courtyard Apartments
- 10- Triplex
- 20 – Mid-Rise
- 12 – High Rise
- 9 – No Accessory Dwelling Units
- 6 – Bungalow/Small Home

The goal of the Housing Conservation District (HCD) is to preserve and expand housing affordability. Which of the possible issues related to this goal gives you the most concern?

(Appendix P.26)

- 97- Increased School Population
- 79 - Scale of New Development/Appropriate for Neighborhood Context
- 63- Loss of Trees
- 46 – All of the Above
- 44- Increased Traffic

- 16- Parking Spillover into Surrounding Streets
- 11- Loss of Private Open Space
- 8- Potential Impact on Utilities and Stormwater Facilities
- 7 – Loss of Historic Sites
- 4 - Safety

Objective 1.1.10 of the Affordable Housing Master Plan states: "Explore flexibility in housing types and residential uses in single-family neighborhoods." How comfortable are you with expanding housing choices in single family neighborhoods?

- 168 – I am not comfortable
- 150 - I am very comfortable
- 59 – I am somewhat comfortable
- 32 – I am somewhat uncomfortable
- 14- Not sure

There was almost an identical split of opinion on this question, with 209 respondents claiming they were either somewhat or very comfortable, and 200 respondents saying they were somewhat or not comfortable. In both cases, the extreme end of comfortability saw the majority of responses.

Financial Tools

The following information was gathered from a series of open ended question asked to garner general reflections from participants on other tools, resources and strategies the County can use. The major themes of those comments are identified below. [The full comments can be found in the XSL spreadsheet]

Given the financial tools Arlington County has explored (or is exploring now), what is missing? What other tools and resources should we consider?

(Appendix P.1)

- 39 -Tools Against Affordable Housing (AHIF)
- 17-Proffers/Private Sector Burdens (more money from Developers)
- 16-No opinion
- 13- Don't know

- 9- County Employee Assistance Programs (make it possible to live in Arlington)
- 9-Re-zoning
- 7- Reduce Spending
- 5- Stronger Staffing/ Better Leadership at County Board Level
- 5- Bonds
- 5-Geographical Equity (spread AH throughout the County)
- 5- Increase taxes
- 3 - Bank Loan incentives
- 3 - County is doing well
- 3 - Land Trusts
- 3 - Rent Control
- 3 - Senior Assistance
- 2 - Increase funds for AHIF
- 2- Tax breaks for renters

Beyond loans originated through the Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF), what other financial strategies should the County explore to create more Committed Affordable Units (CAFs) and improve leveraging of County funds?

(Appendix P.15)

- 56- "Against Affordable Housing Tools" responses
- 21- "Private Sector Burden" (Mandate all developers provide AH, raise developer fees)
- 15- "Don't Know"
- 6- "Geographical Equity" (Spread throughout the County not just the South end)
- 7- "Home Buyer Incentives" (lower interests rates, real estate tax abatement)
- 3- "Home Rental Incentives" (rent 2 families per home, eliminate prop. Taxes)
- 3- "Rent Control"
- 2- Energy Efficiency

Partnerships

Following information was gathered from a series of open ended questions about the comfortability of the County partnering with different types of institutions. [The full comments can be found in the XSL spreadsheet]

How comfortable are you with Arlington County partnering with different types of institutions to provide a greater supply of affordable housing?

Places of Worship

130 - I am very comfortable

104 - I am not comfortable

73 - I am somewhat comfortable

34 - I am somewhat uncomfortable

Higher Education Institutions

135 - I am very comfortable

96 - I am somewhat comfortable

82 - I am not comfortable

53 - Not Sure

31 - I am somewhat uncomfortable

Arlington Public Schools

126 – I'm not comfortable

120 - I am very comfortable

65 - Not Sure

56 - I am somewhat comfortable

19 - I am somewhat uncomfortable

Community-Serving Organizations/Non-Profits

155 - I am very comfortable

114 - I am somewhat uncomfortable

82 - I am not comfortable

38 - Not sure

Are there any other options we should be considering? (Appendix P.41)

Turning Golf Courses into high density affordable housing

Shred Housing for single family homes

Change Zoning Ordinance to limit size of homes on lots

Keep greenspace

Protect single family neighborhoods

Spread affordable housing throughout all of the County

Focus on school capacity issue first

Stop In-Fill development

What are the best ways to partner with institutions to achieve affordable housing?

169 - Land Use Planning

130 - Use of Undeveloped Land/Infill

199 - Joint Redevelopment/Co-Location

Employee Housing

In what additional ways can the County Employee Housing Program demonstrate its commitment to expanding housing opportunities for County employees such as educators and public safety personnel?

(Appendix P.49)

62- Not Important

38-“Vested Interests” Responses (Decisions Makers should have ability to live in County)

22-“Incentives” Responses (bonuses for living in the County, Lower interest rates, forgivable loans)

18-“Higher Pay” Responses

8-“Subsidies” Responses

5-“Transportation” Responses

5-“Criteria for Allocation” Responses

5-“Grants” Responses

As a resident, do you think Arlington County should develop and support homebuyer and renter assistance programs for County and public-school employees?

Yes, need affordable housing

Criteria for obtaining affordable housing (strict guidelines, # years of service, etc.)

Yes, vested interest

Yes, healthier environment

No, Pay them more not set up special programs

No, if you can't afford it here, move to where you can

No, taxpayers should not have to pay or this