

Missing Middle Housing Study

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING STUDY IN CONTEXT

Bulletin

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This bulletin identifies how additional policy areas beyond land use planning and housing influence Arlington's development.

While land use planning and housing are two important factors that shape the future of Arlington, they aren't the only components that contribute to the livability and vitality of its residential communities. Arlington's Comprehensive Plan, originally adopted by the County Board in 1960, guides future development and ensures Arlington is a safe, healthy, convenient and prosperous community. The Comprehensive Plan has grown over time, and today consists of 11 elements that contribute to Arlington's future. The [Essential Guide to Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan](#) contains the adjacent infographic and provides a detailed overview of all 11 elements.

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, Arlington has introduced a racial equity framework, [RACE: Realizing Arlington's Commitment to Equity](#), which builds on existing efforts to expand equity in the areas of digital access, housing, and public health and seeks to make

equity a basic consideration in all functions of county government. Together, this emphasis on equity and the County's existing Comprehensive Plan result in a combination of policies and programs with the aim of directing future development in a manner that results in an equitable Arlington for all.

This bulletin provides a primer on policy areas that often interface with land use planning and housing. Each section introduces information related to existing policies and programs that guide change in the particular policy area, explores data trends in the area, and provides updates related to recent or future actions that the County has taken or plans to take related to the policy area.

In the context of all these different policy areas, the Missing Middle Housing Study is one of many initiatives that Arlington is undertaking to enable the County's vision as a diverse and inclusive world-class urban community.



ENERGY

The [Community Energy Plan](#) (CEP) establishes goals for Arlington to become carbon neutral by 2050, achieve 100% renewable electricity for the community by 2035, and achieve 100% renewable electricity for County government operations by 2025. The CEP incorporates goals for buildings, resilience, renewable energy, transportation, County government actions, and education and human behavior.

What We Know

- More than 61% of Arlington's energy use is connected to building sector consumption – distributed across commercial and multifamily buildings, single-family detached houses, workplaces, and shopping areas.
- The remainder (39%) is associated with transportation-related energy use, including vehicles, public transportation, signalization, and electric and hybrid vehicle-charging infrastructure.
- Arlington's energy usage inefficiencies cost residents and businesses about \$280 million each year.

Recent Actions

The County Board recently adopted a new CEP in 2019 with the goal to become carbon neutral by 2050. The CEP includes goals and policies (i.e., Goal 1, Policies 1.1 and 1.2) related to increasing energy efficiency of buildings and encouraging new buildings – including residential buildings – to be designed and constructed to be more energy efficient than required by the building code.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The [Historic Preservation Master Plan](#) establishes proactive priorities, goals, and objectives for County historic preservation activities that involve the historic built environment, cultural heritage, and County history in general. The document also serves as a guide to communicate the historic preservation policy of the County Board to property owners, residents, businesses, developers, and others.

The [Historic Resources Inventory](#) (HRI), adopted in 2011, is a planning tool that identifies, ranks, and helps protect specific types of historic buildings (garden apartment complexes, shopping centers, and commercial buildings) based on their architectural and historical significance and physical integrity.

What We Know

- Arlington County has a wide variety of historic properties, including Local Historic Districts (40); listings in the National Register of Historic Places (71); Preservation Easements (12); and HRI properties (393).
- Any exterior alterations, demolition and new construction in Arlington's Local Historic Districts are reviewed by the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB). The HALRB will review and provide comments on future development projects for properties identified as Essential and Important in the HRI. If planning tools are developed to expand missing middle housing, there will be consultation with the HALRB to ensure sensitive measures are considered towards historic resources.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION (CONTINUED)

- Preserving Arlington’s historic built environment can achieve overlapping goals, including increasing affordable housing, encouraging sustainability, and promoting the architectural and historic character of the neighborhoods.

Recent Actions

Arlington will begin an update to the Historic Preservation Master Plan in 2020, the first since the plan’s original adoption in 2006.

PARKS

The [Public Spaces Master Plan](#) (PSMP) establishes a vision and framework for developing a network of public spaces across the county, connecting neighborhoods to natural areas, protecting valuable natural resources, providing opportunities for structured and casual recreation, and ensuring access to the Potomac River, Four Mile Run, and their tributaries. The PSMP is supported by three sub-elements: the Urban Forest Master Plan, the Natural Resources Management Plan, and the Public Art Master Plan.

What We Know

From 2014 to 2019, demand for parks and recreation programs grew: there was a 20% increase in membership in senior services, a 17% increase in registration for sports programs, and a 30% increase in demand for community garden plots.

Recent Actions

- The County Board adopted an updated PSMP in 2019. The previous PSMP was adopted in 2005. The PSMP includes a Level of Service approach to estimate current and future needs for public spaces by using population-based and access standards.
- The County Board embraced biophilic principles by [becoming a partner in the Biophilic Cities Network](#) in March 2020.

PARKING

Parking policies are guided by the [Master Transportation Plan](#) (MTP) framework and the Arlington County [Zoning Ordinance](#) (ACZO). The MTP Parking and Curb Space Element focuses on the provision and management of parking and curb space in coordination with planning of transportation elements, while the Zoning Ordinance regulates and classifies the off-street parking requirements by development type.

The careful management and prioritization of on- and off-street parking resources is essential for achieving Arlington’s wider transportation, land-use, and economic development goals. Too much parking wastes resources that could otherwise be better-utilized and can increase congestion of the road network.

PARKING (CONTINUED)

Parking management strategies include, for example:

- Time restrictions
- Designation of space (e.g., handicapped, tour bus, car-share, taxi)
- [Residential Permit Parking \(RPP\)](#)
- Parking fees
- Off-street parking requirements

Examples of how parking management strategies relate to housing development:

- Shared, timed, or priced parking arrangements may reduce the need for parking spaces.
- Parking requirements have a direct relationship with development costs, they either increase or decrease together.
- Multifamily dwellings (including two-family dwellings and townhouses) must fulfill additional [eligibility requirements](#) to participate in the RPP program.

Recent Actions

- The County is currently conducting a [review](#) of the RPP program – the first major review in over 10 years. The goal of the review is to improve the program’s efficiency, user experience, and fairness. To achieve this goal, the review focuses on community-identified topics related to program access, cost, visitors, and enforceability.
- In November 2017, the County Board adopted the [Off-street Residential Parking Guidelines](#), providing a framework for evaluating requests for a reduction in the amount of off-street parking provided as part of special exception site plan projects within the Rosslyn-Ballston and Richmond Highway Metrorail Corridors.

SCHOOLS

Arlington Public Schools (APS) annually publishes [enrollment projections](#) for 10 years into the future to help plan for student enrollment growth. Projections are based on resident births, enrollment trends, and anticipated student yield from new residential development.

APS updates its Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) every two years. This plan addresses future school facility needs for a ten-year period, including projects to accommodate projected student growth.

What We Know

- From 2009 to 2018, enrollment at Arlington Public Schools (APS) increased by 36%.
- K-12 enrollment is projected to grow from 27,878 students (projected for 2020-2021) to 29,598 students (projected for 2029-2030).
- Countywide, 100% Committed Affordable (CAF) Units (garden and elevator multifamily dwellings), followed by single-family detached dwellings, have the highest student generation rates.

SCHOOLS (CONTINUED)

- In 2019, 62% of APS students lived outside the Rosslyn-Ballston, Richmond Highway, and Columbia Pike corridors in Arlington's neighborhoods.

Recent Actions

- Due to the long-term budget uncertainty created by the impacts of COVID-19, APS is preparing a one-year CIP for FY 2021, which is expected to be adopted by the School Board in June 2020.
- APS will develop a 3-6-year CIP in the spring of 2021. Part of this process will include collaboration between APS and Arlington County Government to evaluate new sites for school use.

STORMWATER

The [Stormwater Master Plan](#) contains information on the condition of the County's stormwater management systems, streams, and watersheds, as well as recommendations for improvements.

The [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance](#) helps protect Arlington's streams from damage and pollution caused by development adjacent to streams.

The [Stormwater Management Ordinance](#) requires practices to mitigate stormwater pollution and runoff impacts—to adjacent properties, the storm drain system, and local streams—from development activities. This ordinance, along with the [Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance](#), requires a [land disturbing activity/stormwater permit \(LDA/SWM permit\)](#) for activities that disturb at least 2,500 square feet of land. Activities that require the LDA/SWM permit are subject to certain requirements to help mitigate impacts to stormwater runoff.

The [Floodplain Management Ordinance](#) regulates and restricts development within Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-designated floodplains to manage flood risks.

What We Know

- Approximately 43% of the County's land area is covered by impervious surfaces.
- Impervious surface from regulated development activity has increased in Arlington by approximately 50 acres from Fiscal Year 2014 to Fiscal Year 2019 (nearly twice the footprint of the Pentagon). Over half of this increase is due to the redevelopment of single-family detached houses.
- Excluding APS projects, the redevelopment of single-family detached houses accounts for over 80% of the increase in impervious surface in Arlington since Fiscal Year 2014.
- More than 60% of the County's original stream network was replaced by storm drains under roadways and properties during the intense development activity that occurred in Arlington following World War II. There are significant flood capacity limitations in many parts of the storm drain system.

Recent Actions

- Arlington launched [Flood Resilient Arlington](#) in 2019 to respond to increasing flood risks caused by storm system capacity and overland relief limitations magnified by changing climate and rainfall patterns.

STORMWATER (CONTINUED)

- Several interdepartmental workgroups are working on potential policy changes to address flood risk and resiliency in the areas of emergency response/life safety notification; development methods and regulations; strategic system improvements; and communications and engagement.
- LDA 2.0 is an interrelated effort focused on improving how the volume of stormwater runoff from single-family housing redevelopment is managed.

LOOKING AHEAD

What policies do you view as important in the context of considering opportunities for missing middle housing?

TRANSPORTATION

The [Master Transportation Plan](#) (MTP) promotes effective travel and accessibility throughout Arlington. The MTP, along with the GLUP, is designed to ensure that land use and transportation planning are integrated into all aspects of Arlington's development and planning. Arlington's vision includes walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods well served by public transportation and pedestrian access. Arlington's vision of transportation is a system that provides equity and access to all users. It involves concentrating investment in ways that yield the greatest good for the overall quality of life of Arlington residents and workers.

What We Know

- Capital Bikeshare results in 250,000 annual bicycle trips in Arlington.
- Arlington has a robust multimodal transportation system served by 11 Metrorail stations, 17 ART bus routes, 92 Capital Bikeshare stations, and over 100 miles of biking, walking, and jogging trails.
- On the average weekday in 2018, over 82,000 passengers entered at Arlington Metrorail stations.
- A majority of Arlington residents, 55%, live within one mile of a Metrorail station and over 80% of Arlington's population is within three-quarters of a mile of the County's Primary Transit Network.
- Over 55% of Arlington residents use non-single occupancy vehicle (non-SOV) modes (transit, walk, bike or carpool) to commute to work. In the Rosslyn-Ballston and Richmond Highway Metrorail Corridors, over 70% of residents commute to work by a mode other than a single occupancy vehicle.
- Arlington residents drive approximately 31% less than the national average, based on 2016 data, with a per capita average of 6,918 vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for Arlington residents compared to VMT of 10,065 miles per capita nationally.

TRANSPORTATION (CONTINUED)

- Arlington's transportation network is relatively safe by national standards, with an annual average of 0.84 traffic deaths per 100,000 people, compared to the national average of 11.17 traffic deaths per 100,000 people.

Recent Actions

- Over the past five years, the County has updated the Streets Element (2016), Transit Element (2016), and Bicycle Element (2019). The County also periodically updates its MTP map; the last update was in 2019. All the elements are subject to minor amendments from time to time.
- The County Board adopted a resolution in 2019 committing to [Vision Zero](#), which will lead to the creation of Vision Zero Goals and a Vision Zero Action Plan to eliminate all traffic fatalities and injuries. A draft action plan is due to be completed in fall 2020 and the County plans to begin implementing the plan in 2021.

LOOKING AHEAD

How do you think multiple policies can be balanced when considering opportunities for missing middle housing?

TREES

The [Urban Forest Master Plan](#) (an element of the Public Spaces Master Plan) outlines goals, strategies and priorities that help improve and preserve Arlington's tree canopy.

The [Natural Resources Management Plan](#) (an element of the Public Spaces Master Plan) provides recommendations for policies and actions to preserve and enhance Arlington's natural resources

The [Tree Preservation Ordinance](#) establishes protections for trees located on County property and a special Specimen Tree designation process to protect trees on public and private property.

The [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance](#) requires minimum tree canopy coverage for regulated land disturbing activities, achieved through conservation and/or new planting. The ordinance establishes different minimum tree canopy coverage requirements based on the density of a site. As sites increase in density, the requirement decreases, which can lead to a missed opportunity to achieve greater tree canopy in situations where a site's density increases significantly. The ordinance also protects trees within Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) and establishes buffer zones within 100 feet of streams (plus adjacent steep slopes).

What We Know

- In 2016, [Arlington's tree canopy](#) was 38% (41% when excluding U.S. Department of Defense and Reagan National Airport land).

TREES (CONTINUED)

- Arlington County is home to approximately 755,400 trees, according to an [i-Tree Eco study](#) performed in 2016.
- From 2011 to 2016, Arlington's tree canopy increased by 2.7%.
- From 2008 to 2016, the five one-family dwelling Residential (R) zoning districts experienced a significant loss of tree canopy.
- All four Multiple-family (RA) zoning districts experienced a loss of tree canopy from 2008 to 2016.

Recent Actions

- The County is preparing to initiate an integrated effort to update its Urban Forest Master Plan and its Natural Resources Management Plan in 2020.
- The LDA 2.0 effort is exploring how to provide stormwater management credits for tree preservation and planting, as well as improvements in soil management and decompaction for tree planting locations. For more information on the LDA/SWM permit and LDA 2.0, see the Stormwater section.
- The County [became a partner in the Biophilic Cities Network](#) in March 2020.
- The County updated its RPA map in 2017.



MISSING MIDDLE

Housing Study

The Missing Middle Housing Study will explore how new housing types could help address Arlington's shortfall in housing supply and gaps in housing choices.



LEARN MORE.

housing.arlingtonva.us/missingmiddle



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