

EQUITY STATEMENT OF THE ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

JULY 6, 2020

We of the Arlington County Planning Commission condemn the murders of George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans. These killings are the outgrowth of centuries of intentional social and legal policies that have had the result of dehumanizing and disadvantaging people of color in this country. We do not condone racial injustice and we emphatically support initiatives aimed toward creating a more equitable future.

Systemic racism appears in many guises. The racist use of land use law and policy has been one of the foundational causes of inequality in our nation. The legal basis for land use regulation in our nation, including zoning, is the general legal power of a given jurisdiction to protect the public health, safety and welfare of its residents. And yet that power has often been used contrary to those purposes in a way that is systematically racist. Restrictive deed covenants barred African Americans and others from new housing developments and entire neighborhoods for decades. Zoning laws resulted in African Americans and other people of color being concentrated within parts of a community, finance laws limited access to home loans and thus the development of generational wealth, and public works planning tore apart or isolated communities through infrastructure location.

Arlington has not escaped these effects, and its land use law and policy remain areas that require revision and amendment. The Planning Commission acknowledges that systemic racism has the potential to exist wherever there is authority to regulate health, safety, and welfare; zoning, planning, and land use are no more or less vulnerable to systemic racism than law enforcement. Public officials and political institutions must consistently choose to specifically and deliberately question and work against those systemic inequities, or they will inevitably and necessarily adopt policies shaped by them.

The Planning Commission is regularly focused on impacts of our land use law and policy and on how to address and correct the structural injustices resulting from both. This work requires input from diverse views and backgrounds both on the Commission and in broader civic engagement for us to fulfill our role of hearing and identifying all interests in advising the County Board. This includes careful consideration of the equity implications of any development or land use policy proposal. More needs to be done. We are committed to making Arlington's land use laws and policies equitable for all Arlingtonians, and to support efforts to bring diverse voices to our processes.

For further information on land use policy and systemic racism, below are some resources.

Richard Rothstein, [The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America](#)

Segregated by Design, <https://vimeo.com/328684375> (Video)

Wilma Jones, [My Halls Hill Family: More than a Neighborhood](#)

Dr. Alfred Taylor Jr., [Bridge Builders of Nauck/Green Valley: Past and Present](#)

Christopher Silver, [The Racial Origins of Zoning in American Cities](#)

NPR's Code Switch, [Housing Segregation in Everything \(Video\)](#)

RACE: Realizing Arlington's Commitment to Equity, <https://topics.arlingtonva.us/equity/>

Arlington County Board Resolution on Equity, <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2020/02/Equity-Resolution-FINAL-09-21-19.pdf>

Arlington County - Missing Middle Housing Study, Research Compendium, <https://housing.arlingtonva.us/missingmiddle/research-compendium/>

https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2020/06/MMHS_ResearchCompendium_Bulletin1_final-1.pdf