

Missing Middle Housing Study Zoning Ordinance Amendments

The County has moved into the **Final Phase of the Missing Middle Housing Study**. This week County staff released the **Zoning Ordinance Amendments**, a 42-page document outlining the ZONING AMENDMENTS (CHANGES) the County Board will vote to put in place. I encourage you all to read it carefully.

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/commissions/documents/zoco/lrpc-zoco-mmhs-2022-10-31.pdf>

In my continued efforts to keep you informed about proposed changes to the zoning ordinance, I am highlighting the changes that will most directly impact Glencarlyn.

The County has named these zoning changes “**Expanded Housing Option Development.**”

FIRST- THE FACTS and FIGURES: (page numbers refer to the attached document)

ALL of the expanding housing option development will be “By-Right.” Permitting will be done administratively and does not require any special review.

Glencarlyn is zoned R-6. We have minimum 6000 sf lots. Most lots are 50 ft x 120 ft. Some lots are larger, but all lots are zoned R-6.

TWO Options for Minimum Site Area Development. p.7-8

Option 2A allows for all buildings **up to 8 units to be built on a 6000sf lot**

Option 2B has a sliding scale where **up to 4-unit buildings can be built on a 6000sf lot. 5–8-unit buildings can be built on R-6 lots that are larger than 6000 sf.** (See the Table on p.7 for specifics)

Either option will allow, at a minimum, 4-plexes by right in Glencarlyn.

Minimum Lot Area and Width p. 8

6000 sf lots **can be subdivided into THREE 16 ft wide lots** to allow for **3 townhouses, or into TWO 24 ft wide lots** to allow for **duplexes.**

Maximum Lot Coverage

By right, R-6 lots are allowed **lot coverage up to 48% of the lot.**

Maximum Main Building Footprint

By right, R-6 lots are allowed maximum **footprint up to 2772 sf.**

Maximum Main Building Floor Area

By right, R-6 lots are allowed maximum **floor area of 7200sf-8000sf for 4 to 8-plexes**

PARKING p.11-12

Because Glencarlyn is within ¼ mile of a Primary Transit Network, our minimum on-site parking requirement is .5 cars per unit. For a 4-unit building, only 2 on-site parking spaces will be required. All other vehicles will park on the street.

Location of On-Site Parking Spaces p.28

On an R-6 lot, no more than two parking spaces per lot can face a street frontage. Therefore, even if a developer wanted to have 4 on-site parking spaces for a 4-plex, it would not be allowed on an interior lot. **Cars would need to park on the street**

(See appendix 5, p.41 for Transit Proximity Map. Neighborhoods outside the transit proximity area have a minimum on-site parking requirement of 1 car per unit. You will note which neighborhoods are outside the transit area.)

Design and Site Layout Standards p.13

The **ONLY DESIGN STANDARDS** are for Garage Wall Width on the front of the building (50%) and Building Entrance Orientation.

Multiplexes would be required to have one entrance facing the street. However, they may also have no more than **one entrance on each side of the building.**

Staff is hesitant to establish design standards that may discourage the construction of the multi-unit housing vs single family homes.

On-Site Trees p.14

In **Option 6A**, it sounds like they want to encourage (not require) the retention of at least one mature tree on the property. But it states a new shade tree can also be planted, with not size specification. This seems more of a “feel good” proposal than anything that will help preserve the tree canopy. I will ask the tree experts to provide more information on this.

Option 6B has no additional tree requirements.

Under BOTH Options, tree canopy requirements will be reduced from 20% to 10% for multi-unit buildings on R-6 lots. THIS IS A 100% REDUCTION

Limits on Annual Permits p.15

There are currently **NO LIMITS** on annual building permits, no geographic dispersion.

A “placeholder” has been included in the document while staff considers the appropriateness of potentially placing annual limits. They will also explore a possible geographic component. They have included **an option NOT to CAP development**.

These are the important components of the Zoning Amendments as they apply to Glencarlyn. There may be some I have missed.

The County Board has said for months that they CAN “undo” this if it goes badly. Yet they still have not provided the proof. There are land-use attorneys who believe it CANNOT BE UNDONE.

As you know, I continue to have strong concerns about these zoning amendments. I completely support changes to housing policy that will increase affordability and diversity and correct imbalances. However, I still believe this Missing Middle framework does not accomplish these objectives. The County acknowledges this will not assist low- and moderate-income residents. Furthermore, I believe this broad-brush, market-driven plan will be harmful to many communities, including Glencarlyn.

Even if you support the idea of providing more housing choice throughout the County, I ask you to **consider the following**:

There is currently **NO LIMIT** on the number of multi-plex units that can be built in Glencarlyn. Developers have publicly stated they will purchase the most affordable lots, and cited the R-6 lots in central and south Arlington. There will not be geographic dispersion. Entire blocks and streets could be redeveloped. The County has NO IDEA how many of these units will be built each year and the developers have told them it will be many more than 20 annually, possibly 100s. Some neighborhoods could be overrun, while others have no development at all. **Why not prevent that?**

These multi-unit buildings will **NOT be similar or compatible** to the single-family homes in Glencarlyn.

I encourage you to **go out in your yard and measure a 90 x 30 ft rectangle. THAT is the allowable footprint of these new units.** (Actually, it is a little bit larger than that) I do not know how to capture the sense of **that entire space being 35 ft high**, but just try to imagine. **The majority of homes in Glencarlyn are HALF THAT SIZE and NOT NEARLY AS HIGH.** Even our newer homes are not nearly that large. These multi-plex buildings will dwarf existing homes.

And the 4-plexes can have 7200 sf of interior living space, an 8-plex 8000sf. **NO home in Glencarlyn is that large. In fact, it is over 3 TIMES as large as 80% of the homes in Glencarlyn**

The County COULD establish design or building guidelines that would make these multi-plexes compatible. But they are inclined not to do so because they do not want to do anything to discourage their development. This is why they are letting the developers build “by-right.”

There is no mention where the up to 12, possibly 24, refuse, recycle and green waste bins will go on these lots, just that they need to be screened in some fashion.

The **arbitrary nature of the revised parking ratio**, determined by proximity to a transit stop, does not take into consideration any of the concerns about street width, emergency vehicle access and the already limited on-street parking in older and smaller neighborhoods. Look at the Parking Map, p.41, and see where the 1 car ratio applies and where the .5 ratio applies.

What this means to Glencarlyn is for each 4-plex built, there could potentially be 6 additional cars added to on-street parking. Each 8-plex could add an additional 12 cars to the street.

Minimum tree canopy in Glencarlyn will be reduced by 100%.

There is so much more to think about and digest. More than I can outline here.

The most disturbing aspect of these zoning amendments is the County Board’s disregard for the many concerns and suggestions expressed by county residents in emails, letters and community conversations. Read the comments and concerns from the Community Conversations and see what is said about parking and the like.

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/county-board/documents/misc/notes.missingmiddle.communityconversations10.28.22.final.post.pdf>

Why is the County Board ignoring the voices of their constituents?

The majority of county residents oppose this plan.

Matt and Christian came and spoke with Glencarlyn residents. They said they were listening.

I, along with other civic association leaders, have been in weekly conversations with ALL of the board members. They said they were listening.

These zoning amendments do not reflect that.

And more importantly WHY THE RUSH?

This is the most drastic zoning change in 50 years.

The County has never identified how many more housing units, and of what type, are needed in Arlington.

The County has not done comprehensive analyses of the impact these amendments will have on the economy, environment, infrastructure, schools, transportation, and the displacement of renters, seniors and low-income residents.

After we were told by several board members that they will take as much time as they need, we now find that they are racing to vote to advertise by Dec 17th, and probably vote to approve in January.

They have even taken the extraordinary step of setting back-to-back meetings of the Long-Range Planning Commission and the Zoning Commission on the same night, to meet their deadline.

There is still time to share your thoughts, pro or con, with the County Board.

Once again, I encourage you to write/email the members of the board and share your thoughts and concerns. I still want to believe that our voices matter.

Send your emails to:

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Feel free to reach out to me with questions or for further discussion.

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