

**From:** Cheryl Marceau <cheryl.a.marceau@gmail.com>  
**Date:** October 27, 2020 at 4:08:01 PM EDT  
**To:** "jraitt@town.arlington.ma.us" <jraitt@town.arlington.ma.us>  
**Subject:** Fwd: **Arlington Needs Affordable Housing -- Not More Housing in General**

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Jenny,

I neglected to include you in the distribution for this email. Apologies for my oversight.

Cheryl Marceau

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Cheryl Marceau <[cheryl.a.marceau@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl.a.marceau@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** **Arlington Needs Affordable Housing -- Not More Housing in General**  
**Date:** October 27, 2020 at 2:36:09 PM EDT  
**To:** [EBenson@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:EBenson@town.arlington.ma.us), [KLau@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:KLau@town.arlington.ma.us), [keinstein@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:keinstein@town.arlington.ma.us), [DWatson@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:DWatson@town.arlington.ma.us), [JCurro@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:JCurro@town.arlington.ma.us), [rzsembery@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:rzsembery@town.arlington.ma.us), Len Diggins <[LDiggins@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:LDiggins@town.arlington.ma.us)>, [JHurd@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:JHurd@town.arlington.ma.us), [DMahon@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:DMahon@town.arlington.ma.us), [ellisjohnr@yahoo.com](mailto:ellisjohnr@yahoo.com), [kezasimister@gmail.com](mailto:kezasimister@gmail.com), [urickcourtney@gmail.com](mailto:urickcourtney@gmail.com), [stacie@cbuilding.org](mailto:stacie@cbuilding.org), Jennifer Susse <[jennifer.susse@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.susse@gmail.com)>, [christopher.wilbur@gmail.com](mailto:christopher.wilbur@gmail.com), Adam Auster <[adam.auster.arlington@gmail.com](mailto:adam.auster.arlington@gmail.com)>, [r.dratch@yahoo.com](mailto:r.dratch@yahoo.com)  
**Cc:** Cheryl Marceau <[cheryl.a.marceau@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl.a.marceau@gmail.com)>

Charlie Baker and Marty Walsh argue that we need more housing in Greater Boston because without housing, the job market here will collapse. Adam Chapdelaine and others in Arlington appear to believe that it's Arlington's responsibility to supply a disproportionate share of that housing.

Arlington is already far denser than many communities around us and within Route 128, according to the US Census Bureau's 2019 data:

Arlington:	8325 people/sq mi
Watertown:	7992 people/sq mi
Medford:	6934 people/sq mi
Melrose:	5766 people/sq mi
Belmont:	5316 people/ sq mi
Winchester:	3545 people/sq mi
Lexington:	1910 people/sq mi

If higher density really resulted in lower prices due to increased supply, then Arlington should be cheaper than Medford or Melrose, yet it is not. This data alone suggests that there is no clear relationship between density and price. Somerville and Cambridge are far from cheap, despite their vastly greater density (18,404/sq mi and 16,470/sq mi respectively).

All you have to do is check Zillow (flawed though it is) or drive around the area to see significant numbers of vacant housing units as well as plenty of new housing being built. The new construction may not be in Arlington, but it is in the area, including right on our borders. We've also added plenty of housing within Arlington, including the huge apartment complex behind Tokyo Taipei in the Center and the mixed-development complex on the Symmes site. (In a post-COVID world, the demand for housing in the greater Boston area may be permanently lower than its pre-COVID levels, and nothing under discussion seems to reflect that reality.)

Unlike many other cities and towns nearby, not to mention throughout the metro area, Arlington has almost no land suitable for commercial development. What little there is, e.g. behind the Mirak property in the Heights, has been approved for more housing rather than the light industry which could thrive there and provide us with a greater industrial base. Has the town done one single thing to explore or encourage such light industry? If so, it is not apparent. I'm thinking small grain mills, breweries, distilleries, other light manufacturing and other small businesses which would be well suited to our town.

Adding so-called mixed use development involving storefronts has little impact on our commercial tax base, and there's no evidence that demand for storefronts will ever come back to the levels of the past decade, when retail stores began shuttering left and right. High density and foot traffic have not saved small businesses in Porter Square, Harvard Square, or Back Bay, to name a few high density neighborhoods where there is plenty of foot traffic and people with disposable income.

Increased residential development has one more serious flaw, particularly if we add housing that is open to families with children (vs senior-only housing, for example). Every new unit of housing that we add costs us more to service than it brings in tax revenues. Al Tosti and the Finance Committee have done the analysis and documented this quite clearly. We are already at a breaking point in terms of property tax burdens on our seniors and on those of more limited resources in this town. Many people will be forced to move in the next 10 years due to the tax burdens of the overrides, the Minuteman Tech debt exclusion, and the AHS debt exclusion.

My husband and I are landlords and provide below-market rented housing to retirees, yet we were forced to raise the rent for the first time in several years due to our tax increases, and I fear that we will have to keep raising the rent every year for as long as we own our 2-family house. The same thing is playing out all over town. Added residential development will not improve this scenario. Other cities and towns inside 128 have significant commercial development to offset the cost of providing services to the town, but Arlington does not. Nor do I see the governor and Mayor Walsh supporting property tax measures which would level this particular playing field.

It is in our interests to maintain a vibrant community by creating economic diversity. There is zero proof that economic diversity drives racial diversity despite the fervent belief that it would, and I don't suggest that will happen here simply by creating even more density. We need to work hard to create a community – including a public school system – that is welcoming and inclusive if we want racial diversity. Economic diversity requires affordable housing, and that is what the entire metro area lacks. We do not need more million dollar condos and multimillion dollar houses. We need affordable housing.

Section 40b is 50 years old at this point, and it is a dismal failure in terms of driving affordability. I liken it to trickle-down economics – trickle-down affordability, if you will. The only way we make a meaningful dent in affordability is to build actual affordable housing, not hope that developers will squeeze out enough units here and there to meet the need.

Along with affordable housing, we need to preserve open space. Clean air is a diversity issue. You've surely read multiple articles in recent months about how air pollution makes COVID more deadly in poor communities. Open space that has trees and grass helps to mitigate air pollution effects. Balconies on condos are NOT open space, by the way, nor is a paved parking lot. Parks and playgrounds and yards with trees and grass are open space.

Town Meeting rejected density proposals last year that were less draconian than those before us this year. I'm deeply concerned that our town officials, elected and appointed, would neglect the wishes of the voters along with the needs of the community for affordability and clean air. Density is not the answer. I urge Precinct 3 TMMs to vote NO and I express my great dissatisfaction that town officials would support the measures under consideration.

Cheryl Marceau

When it comes to housing, the laws of supply and demand don't apply the way they do to commodities. One house is not like any other house, and one town is not like any other

town. Adding some more housing does not drive down the price. Even adding a lot of housing does not necessarily drive down the price. We've added a lot of housing in Arlington since I moved here in 1980, as have Cambridge and Somerville

Adding a little more housing in Arlington – an ADU here, a condo building there – will add marginally to the total housing in a region that is already seeing plummeting COVID vacancy rates.

Making Arlington more dense for the sake of density will not make housing here cheaper, nor will it magically fill vacant storefronts. Take a look at Porter Square, Harvard Square, Back Bay, and other dense neighborhoods. Somerville's density is in the multiples of Arlington's,