



Disability Policy Consortium

Dear Members of the Arlington Redevelopment Board,

On behalf of the Disability Policy Consortium, I am writing in support of a warrant to *“Amend Section 8.2.3A of the Zoning Bylaw to increase the percentage of affordable housing units required in any development subject to Section 8.2 of the Zoning Bylaw from 15% to 25%” or take any action related thereto.*”

This warrant would significantly improve the lives of people with disabilities in Arlington by expanding the amount of housing options available to them. People with disabilities are often unable to work or are only able to work low paying jobs, either due to their disability or due to asset caps and restrictions on health coverage imposed by the state. Additionally, having a disability is often expensive, especially for families. By expanding the percentage of affordable units required in new developments, this warrant would create substantial housing options for low-income people with disabilities, as well as people with disabilities who are supported by housing vouchers. A voucher is only useful if the voucher holder can find an apartment with rent at or under the voucher’s value. Market-rate housing is out of reach for voucher holders. Stable housing is the number one social determinant of health, and this is especially true for people with disabilities. The Covid-19 pandemic has only reinforced this fact. Nursing homes and congregate settings have seen horrific death tolls, and people who lack sufficient housing have been extremely hard-hit as well.

Furthermore, due to state and federal law, only new housing developments are required to be physically accessible or adaptable. Housing built prior to 1991 is exempt from accessibility and adaptability requirements. Newer units tend to be more expensive, essentially meaning that accessibility costs extra. By expanding the percentage of affordable units in new developments, the town of Arlington would also guarantee that more affordable units would also be accessible, reducing rent burdens on individuals and families who cannot compromise on accessibility, and giving people who have had to compromise on accessibility the option to live in an apartment that actually meets their needs.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at lsomervell@dpcma.org.

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Lenny Somervell
Advocacy Director
