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Subject: Letter in opposition to the proposed density articles

I'm writing to express my strong opposition to the Arlington Redevelopment Board's proposed density articles.

These density articles have no chance whatsoever of achieving the stated goal of creating affordable housing. As a matter of fact, they're likely to cause the destruction of existing housing that Arlington residents of moderate means can afford and currently live in.

These articles would radically increase Arlington's population by something like 20%. Yet they make no provision for the additional services that will have to be provided for the new residents, and the additional taxes won't cover the additional services.

Although the ARB claims these articles will create affordable housing, there's nothing whatsoever in these articles that in any way guarantees that even one unit of affordable housing will be built!

As a matter of fact, these articles are likely to **REDUCE**, not increase the amount of Arlington's housing stock that people of moderate means can afford. Since new luxury apartments command much higher rents than existing ones, those increased rents plus the ability to build buildings with more floors than existing buildings, will provide developers incentive to tear down existing apartment buildings, thereby driving tenants out of older less expensive apartments. The newly built apartments they'll be replaced with will command a price higher than the old tenants can afford. Thus, Arlington's existing diversity will be destroyed as current tenants are driven out and replaced with tenants who can afford the new luxury rents.

These articles would also reduce setbacks along Mass. Av., Broadway, and Summer St. to nothing, while allowing walls of 5-story high buildings along the entire length of those streets. Usually, minimum green space requirements are met by plantings at ground level where all passers-by can see and enjoy them. That's an important part of what makes a town a pleasant place to live. But since these articles eliminate setbacks, ground-level plantings are not a possible option for meeting the requirements. As a result, the ARB proposes counting rooftop gardens. The result at ground level will be a sterile, unfriendly environment.

Drastic changes to the Town's zoning bylaws can have permanent detrimental effects on the town, so they must be carefully considered. I've spoken to many people in town, and virtually none of them have heard anything about the ARB's proposals to dramatically increase the Town's population density. These articles should not be rushed through. They should be the subject of extensive discussion, with an informed and aware Town citizenry as the primary participants. And the discussions should be real opportunities for Town citizens to fully understand what's being proposed, and to participate in coming up with better ideas, both on what Arlington's problems are, and on what solutions to those problems Arlington citizens want to see implemented. The time-limited guided discussions that have been conducted so far serve only to prevent Town citizens from having any real input.

These drastic proposed changes to Arlington's zoning bylaws are serious enough that they should be debated by Town citizens until there's substantial consensus. Although it's certainly possible that they could be rushed through while most Town citizens are unaware that they're even being considered, doing so would demonstrate the gravest disrespect for Abraham Lincoln's statement that our government is a government of the people, **BY** the people, and **FOR** the people.

Mark Rosenthal

Arlington resident