

From: "Erin Zwirko" <EZwirko@town.arlington.ma.us>  
To: refdesk@world.std.com  
Cc: andre@ma-smartgrowth.org, abunnell@town.arlington.ma.us,  
dwatson@town.arlington.ma.us, ebenson@town.arlington.ma.us, JRaitt@town.arlington.ma.us,  
klau@town.arlington.ma.us, "Mary Muszynski" <MMuszynski@town.arlington.ma.us>  
Date: Wed, 27 Mar 2019 11:08:02 -0400  
Subject: Re: Comments on Arlington Multi-Family Uses and Mixed Use Zoning Proposal -  
walkability, density, infill, mixed use, street trees, guarantee of affordable units, protection  
against tear down and cut down

Rachael,

Thank you for your comments.

Best,  
Erin

Erin Zwirko, AICP, LEED AP  
Assistant Director  
Department of Planning and Community Development  
Town of Arlington  
direct: 781-316-3091  
[ezwirko@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:ezwirko@town.arlington.ma.us)

From: "refdesk@world.std.com" <refdesk@world.std.com>  
To: Erin Zwirko <EZwirko@town.arlington.ma.us>  
Cc: andre@ma-smartgrowth.org  
Date: Wed, 27 Mar 2019 10:44:07 -0400  
Subject: Comments on Arlington Multi-Family Uses and Mixed Use Zoning Proposal - walkability, density,  
infill, mixed use, street trees, guarantee of affordable units, protection against tear down and cut down

Dear Erin Zwirko

See below my comments on the Arlington Multi-Family Uses and Mixed Use Zoning Proposal. There are a couple very big unanswered questions that concern me and a lot of people. Please look at and reply to these if possible, as well as the predictable problems and possible solutions I sent in January.

1/ What is the guarantee of affordable units?

A lot of us worry that you will allow developers to build 20 buildings of 5 units each and sleaze around the 6 unit limit for affordable units. We want clear and strong guarantees that these changes, and any new building, will create a good number of affordable units.

2/ What is the protection against tear downs and cut downs?

What guarantee do we have that we will not see wide scale tear downs of existing buildings and historic buildings and cut downs of existing mature trees? No one but real estate developers wants to see lots of tear down and cut down. What is our protection against this?

3/ What is our protection against "hit and run" big developers?

Many people worry that this will be a gold rush for "hit and run" big developers. Tear down whatever they can, throw up as many junky units as the

law allows, make a ton of cash, leave town fast, and leave Arlington with the long term bills. What protections do we have that all changes and new development will be done in a responsible and sustainable way?

Rachael Stark

> On Jan 7, 2019, at 4:02 PM, [refdesk@world.std.com](mailto:refdesk@world.std.com) wrote:

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> Dear Erin Zwirko,

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> The Town of MAPC Arlington Multifamily Zoning Project Update Multifamily Zoning Recommendations look interesting. I look forward to learning more. I hope to attend the January 10th forum, but wanted to send my thoughts in advance as well. I am a long time advocate for walkability and walkable land use in Arlington. I have attended many meetings in Arlington and at the MBTA, MAPC and WalkBoston about walkability, walkable land use, active transportation, sustainable transit, transit oriented development, zoning, mixed use, mixed income, affordable housing, historic preservation, and urban forest preservation. As a librarian at the MIT Rotch library of architecture and planning, I learned even more about land use. My comments are a bit long, but I hope you will find them worth reading. They are based on 25 years worth of observation and activism in Arlington and beyond.

>

> Rachael Stark

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> MODERATE DENSITY WORKS WELL WITH INFILL & MIXED USE

> I hope that all plans to create more areas of moderate density in Arlington focus on infill development and mixed use, rather than tear down of existing buildings. I hope the open space in new and existing building will focus on protection for existing mature trees and planting of new trees, rather than only more grass.

>

> CALM ANXIETY ABOUT DENSITY THROUGH EDUCATION ABOUT HISTORY

> I like to point out to people that Arlington has seen gracious and graceful increases in density for centuries though infill development. Our beloved Victorian era buildings were infill to the Colonial farms, 1920's two families were infill to the Victorian, modern buildings infill to the 1920's. We have been adding moderate density for centuries in ways that look good and work well. The secret is to avoid the temptation to tear down what was there before when you build more. Tear down and you get bland low value monotony in Menotomy. Tuck things in and you get intriguing high value variety. Some of our most beautiful existing buildings are historic examples of multi-family and mixed use. Most of what is suggested in the plan already exists in Town. Do more of what they did in 1880 and 1920, and do it as well as they did it, and all is well. Build thoughtfully, build quality and build to last. Some Arlington residents are very anxious about density. They imagine the skyscrapers of Tokyo or the wind tunnels of 5th Avenue Manhattan arriving on Mass Ave. If you point out that we have been doing infill for centuries, AND if you make sure to use the same methods that have worked for centuries, then they often calm down.

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> PORCHES & TREES ARE WONDERFUL OPEN SPACE WITHOUT NEED FOR LARGE LOTS OF GRASS

> I live in one of Arlington's many wonderful 1920's two families. We have a lovely back porch that overlooks trees from several blocks around. We use it all the time and enjoy it immensely. We garden in pots on our porch, eat dinner there, read there, chat with our neighbors from there, and invite

family and friends to enjoy it with us. A well shaded porch surrounded by trees can be much more enjoyable than a sun blasted patch of grass. Houses do not have to be "protected" from neighbors with a moat of grass setback surrounding them. Exactly what are we guarding against with setback and side yards? What are we so afraid of? Trees are what make open space enjoyable. Trees have a tiny footprint on the ground, but greatly improve property value and quality of life. Trees protect us from flooding by absorbing water from the rain, and protect us from climate change by absorbing carbon from the air. I hope the plan includes protection for existing mature trees on private and public property, and also encourages and supports the planting and care of additional trees.

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> SETBACK & HEIGHT BUFFER ABOVE SECOND FLOOR NOT NEEDED - GIVE US SMOOTH, CONTINUOUS SIDEWALKS WITH STREET TREES

> I do not think the stepped appearance of proposed buildings will help persuade people that taller buildings are ok. People want smooth, continuous sidewalks with ample street trees. They want a varied and lively street scene, safe crossing of streets, useful things to walk to, and nothing in the way of walking down the sidewalk. No light poles in the way, no oversized granite planters, no bumpy bricks, no bushes to obstruct sightlines. Just well maintained, smooth continuous sidewalks shaded by well maintained street trees. If you make the walking pleasant, then people do not mind walking by taller buildings. If you make walking unpleasant, then they mind everything.

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> REDUCED PARKING WORKS ONLY WITH INCREASED WALKABILITY AND BUS SERVICE

> Reduced parking is a great idea, and essential to the success of your plans. Thank you for including it. But reduced parking ONLY works when it is paired with increased walkability, bikeability, bus service, and possibly shuttles. Give us better ways to get around and we need less parking. Hold the MBTA to their schedules. No more bus bunching with 30 minute waits and then 3 buses at once. If walking and biking were safer and more pleasant, then more people would get rid of their cars. If the MBTA bus service were frequent and reliable then more people would ride the bus to work and play and shop. Alewife is currently a hive of shuttles. Add more shuttles up the hills of Arlington and to other places with poor MBTA service. Let people get to Mass Ave and Alewife without need to drive there. Make it very clear that the new development is intended for people with few or no cars. Insist that this be mentioned every time a unit turns over. Reduce the need for cars and you can reduce the demand for space needed to store them.

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> CHRIS LEINBERGER DESCRIBES "VALUE CAPTURE" TO CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

> If you have not yet read "The Option of Urbanism" by Chris Leinberger, I recommend it highly. "Value capture" makes affordable housing practical. Developers and municipalities share the increase in property value caused by increased walkability. This can be used to keep some housing affordable, even in highly desirable walkable areas near transit. Build nothing but multi-family "luxury" units and you only make the problem worse. Build oversized "Mac Mansions" with way too many square feet of house space and garage and you annoy people. Give us more walkable infill near useful and interesting services and we vote with our feet to be there.

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>> Begin forwarded message:

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>> From: "Town of Arlington, MA" <[do-not-reply@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:do-not-reply@town.arlington.ma.us)>

>> Subject: Jan. 10 Forum on Multifamily Housing Production

>> Date: December 18, 2018 at 5:18:12 PM EST

>> To: [refdesk@world.std.com](mailto:refdesk@world.std.com)  
>> Reply-To: [do-not-reply@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:do-not-reply@town.arlington.ma.us)  
>>  
>> Jan. 10 Forum on Multifamily Housing Production  
>> Date: 12/18/2018 5:15 PM  
>> Jan. 10 Forum on Multifamily Housing Production  
>> Join the Department of Planning and Community Development on Thursday,  
January 10, 2019, 7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., in Town Hall Auditorium, to learn  
about proposed zoning recommendations to encourage multifamily housing  
production. The Multifamily Zoning Project builds on recommendations in the  
Town's Housing Production Plan, which seeks to increase housing diversity and  
affordability by facilitating the production of multifamily housing in key  
smart growth locations. Read the full release, Housing Production Plan, and  
recommendations at [arlingtonma.gov/planning](http://arlingtonma.gov/planning).  
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