

What Arlington Needs

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Thank you Mr. Selzer for your very careful presentation

The only housing Arlington needs is affordable housing in addition to some elderly housing – that is -according to available information including Arlington’s Master Plan. Arlington’s affordable housing is increased best by leveraging funds we can easily access to purchase existing buildings and residences for renovation for affordable housing. Such funds include CPA, CDBG, federal HOME funds etc. That strategy will work even better when we establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, increased linkage fees for developers and Real Estate Transfer fees. The Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw helps but we need to counteract developers’ gaming that system. Arlington Redevelopment Board should better protect houses like the Atwood House for use as affordable housing.

Arlington needs more commerce and business. We should not change zoning to enable more market rate and luxury residential units costing us more in services – including schools - than the tax revenue they bring. Our residential real estate taxes are 94.4% of tax revenue –that is by far the highest of all metro communities. Our non-residential share is only 5.6%. whereas Boston’s non-residential tax share is 47% - nine times greater than ours. We cannot afford to burden Arlington residential taxpayers further with confiscatory real estate taxes to provide housing for much wealthier municipalities.

39% of Arlington residents are renters. Many spend more than 30% of income for rent even though Arlington rentals cost less than Somerville, Cambridge, Belmont, Watertown and sometimes less than government-subsidized rates. For

instance, for a 1-bedroom unit in Arlington the rent is just above \$1400. For a similar unit in Brookline the rent is over \$1,700. A new unit in either case is much more –at between \$2,000 and \$2,500. If we permit massive new construction of Mixed Use buildings then many renters who cannot afford newly constructed units would be displaced or evicted. In Boston evictions last year reached 43 evictions per day. We could have a tsunami of cries for help which Arlington cannot deal with – resources of Arlington Housing Authority (AHA) and non-profits e.g. Housing Corporation of Arlington would be overwhelmed with a tragic increase - likely hundreds of displaced families threatened with homelessness.

Thank you.