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Date: 09/09/2021 03:27 PM
Subject: Errors and Fabrications in Draft Housing Plan

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**MEMORANDUM TO THE ARLINGTON SELECT BOARD RE: DRAFT
HOUSING PLAN**

Please include in entirety in official Select Board Agenda record of Correspondence Received

Date: September 9, 2021

To: Chairperson Stephen W. DeCoursey and members of the Board

From: Patricia Barron Worden, Ph.D.
Town Meeting member, pct. 8
Member, Housing Plan Implementation Committee

Re: Draft Arlington Housing Plan (attached)

Please be advised that the Arlington Housing Plan draft (Housing Needs Assessment 08-2021) has so many errors and in it that I cannot support it without extensive revision. As it exists it is a poisonous document.

There are an amazing number of mistakes/errors/fabrications of many kinds. A few of these I will point out in a list below and some of them I have already brought to your attention in connection with the shortcomings of the Fair Housing Action Plan. They are so numerous that at this point finding and correcting the errors should be the responsibility of the consultants and Planning Director who are paid

by and responsible to taxpayers – not to other municipal leaders. Taxpayers deserve an honest accounting – not a regurgitation of the repeated attempts to implement dense zoning aspirations of the Town Manager and Planning Department.

There is a repeated attempt in the document to implicate a racist motivation to Arlington's history of planning and zoning. This has been done both by slanderous direct statements or by innuendo particularly in the draft document's later sections and in the section on zoning. Given the apparent obsession of the non-resident Town Manager and Planning Director (PD) of a desire, without any evidence whatsoever, to convince residents that Arlington's zoning is racist I think it would be helpful for these two officials – indeed essential - to meet and discuss this with those who actually designed the Arlington Zoning Bylaw of 1975. Several of those individuals are alive and include:

Alan McClennen, Jr., former distinguished Director of Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development and currently a Cape Cod resident, and John L. Worden III esq., former Arlington Moderator, currently an Arlington resident and Town Meeting member.

Accusations of racism in Arlington zoning history should be vetted by these and others who were involved in the creation of our zoning. There is simply no evidence for it. I published some facts about the Planning Director's unacceptable views of Arlington's planning history in a letter to the *Arlington Advocate* in August 12th of this year (attached).

Racism should not be confused with lack of economic attributes and socioeconomic factors – which occur in all races. Nor should affordability of housing be equated with high residential density – much of Arlington's reduced availability of inexpensive housing is due to teardowns of eminently affordable homes replaced with much more expensive single or two family houses. The Consultants' bizarre and offensive recent statement that "Arlington is not zoned to create affordable housing" is ludicrous in view of the fact that Arlington's existing plentiful multi-family structures contain hundreds of naturally affordable units. It also ignores the fact that Arlington's Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw was created early and as one of the best in the Commonwealth.

The Planning Director was absent at the consultant's presentation of the Housing Plan Draft to the HPIC. Instead the discussion with the Committee was managed

by a pleasant assistant who is new to the area and its history and so no meaningful discussion occurred. It is not clear how much of the Plan is the creation of non-resident appointed officials. The draft Plan deviates scarcely at all from the policy directives which the latter have tried unsuccessfully to promote for several years. I was hoping for enlightened ideas but what the Plan gives us is SAME OLD-SAME OLD. It is a cruel document encouraging construction of lucrative market rate and luxury residential construction at the expense of affordable housing, businesses and quality of life and schools. It ignores the fact that many low income residents will be forced to leave Arlington if this plan is adopted.

Very truly yours,

Patricia

PARTIAL LIST OF ERRORS IN THE DRAFT PLAN

(This is only a tiny selection of the many errors and fabrications in the draft Arlington Housing Plan. Despite the Consultant and Planning Director's frequent references to community outreach, neither this presentation or the draft Plan have been available to the public so that feedback from the public has been completely avoided. Even I, as a Committee member, had barely enough time to read this disastrous Plan – sent out one day prior to the presentation. Despite urgency of climate factors the draft Plan has no suggestions for reversing the outrageous loss that Arlington has experienced (under current leadership) of tree canopy with creation of heat islands due to residential construction, clear cutting, and speculation. **The major overall flaw in the report is that it scarcely addresses affordability issues and shamelessly completely avoids the needs of very low income residents most in danger of homelessness and of Arlington Housing Authority.**

Under the heading of KEY FINDINGS

p. 2-3 third bullet point. The statement that the “overall picture of Arlington is that of White, middle- and upper-income homeowners” belies the fact that Arlington, although gradually falling victim to gentrification under current leadership, is still predominantly middle class, Also, as some of Barrett consultants' own economic

data demonstrates, the chief obstacle to diversity in Arlington (economic and racial) is the cost of housing that is being constructed or rebuilt after teardown.

Arlington's median household income is 108K per year. The teardown-duplex homes being built for more than 950K and the new single family homes at 1.5M require households to make 200K per year. Those residences are not going to increase diversity-either racial or socio-economic. Arlington's leadership has opposed efforts to decrease these teardowns and preserve affordability and diversity.

p. 2-3 fourth bullet point. This scurrilous statement is completely wrong. There is no evidence for the existence of historically discriminatory policies of the past in Arlington's government. It should be removed.

p. 2-10 Figure 2.4.1 this erroneous slide tries to show the degree of racial diversity in different neighborhoods. I was flabbergasted by this slide. Barrett Associates claim that several large tracts are 100% white. It even shows a large segment of my own precinct as having zero minorities whereas it is actually 15% minority. Astoundingly the Plan claims that a large land area around the Stratton School is 100% white despite the fact that Stratton School has a 38% minority student enrollment. This information is not accurate and must be corrected in accordance with the 2020 census.

p. 2-21 Under the heading Mixed Use

The Housing Plan should elaborate on the failed implementation of Mixed Use in Arlington due largely to incomplete safeguards in the bylaw as designed by the Planning Department and promoted by them and the ARB. The faulty bylaw has resulted in apartment buildings masquerading as mixed use buildings thus allowing developers to drastically reduce open space. The Plan should suggest improvements in this failed mixed use bylaw instead of ignoring its failings. There is usually only a pretense of a business use in some tiny area of the new mixed building and plans. Existing cherished businesses serving our residents are being destroyed to create these false "mixed use" buildings. They are not mixed use – see 483 Summer Street where the "business" is an office for the owner-nothing to contribute to the hyped "vibrancy" of mixed use for the streetscape. They do not allow for sufficient open space for trees and plantings that make authentic apartment residences attractive and provide environmental and climate-control benefits and at least some play space for children. Developers can game the Inclusionary Zoning bylaw in various ways so that very few "mixed use"

apartments will be affordable. Residential multi-unit developers can build 4- or 5-unit buildings to bypass the bylaw requiring provision of affordable units if six units are being constructed. The ARB has allowed a permit for a forbidden use in a “mixed use” building (see WWW.ARFRR.ORG). The ARB’s permit awards for some of these “mixed use” buildings have resulted much developer speculation; in holes in the ground (see 1500 Massachusetts Avenue where a handsome house formerly stood); allowed violations of the zoning bylaw (see, for example, illegal permitting of open space/internal area F/A ratio violations granted by the ARB in the case of the former Toraya restaurant block, 882-892 Massachusetts Avenue opposite the high school, for a hopelessly cramped “mixed use” apartment building. This is not what was promised when the PD persuaded Town Meeting to approve their “mixed use” bylaw. It needs to be corrected. The Housing Plan should spell out a remedy.

Under the heading DEMOLITIONS & REPLACEMENT HOMES

p. 2-27 Town Meeting established the Residential Study Group (RSG) to investigate the teardown/mansionization problem. RSG studied this along with the PD. Before the study was completed the PD wrote its own inadequate flawed report (“Report on Demolition and Replacement Homes, 2019”). During the same period the RSG attempted for many reasons to have a role in the ADU warrant article being planned by the PD. The PD/Manager immediately ghosted RSG. They were never allowed to meet again to complete the investigation authorized by Town Meeting and produce its own report.

(As an aside, ADUs are significant in teardown problems since they enable developers to maximize the number of units they can build.)

Under the heading Housing Sale Prices

p.2-29 The draft Plan states the obvious “There a remarkably few opportunities for young wage earners to choose Arlington or anywhere nearby.” It further points out that the same is true for communities comparable to Arlington. It fails, however, to point out that Arlington’s comparable neighboring towns all have significantly lower residential density.

Under the Heading HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

p. 2-31 This section correctly observes that affordable “units that have offered a pathway to owning a home in the past have been a key target of demolition/rebuild projects in Arlington’s older neighborhoods.” However, there is no mention of the fact that RSG (see above) was authorized by Town Meeting to investigate this problem but was ghosted by PD/ Manager before it could complete its study.

P.2-37 see heading POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

This heading is extremely misleading. The barriers discussed pertain to barriers for very dense and very expensive residential construction favored by the PD. They have little or nothing to do with affordability. **For example, there is no interest in the provision of affordable housing by purchase and renovation of existing residences etc. which has been a wonderful approach for affordability.**

The heading should read POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO HIGHEST POSSIBLE DENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT OF UNAFFORDABLE APARTMENTS

The Plan should include a statement that the PD and leadership of the Town opposed any and all of the many initiatives to increase affordable housing at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. This included the PD and her colleagues’ preference that Arlington would have no requirement for affordability of ADUs (except for non-profits). The PD/ARB never even offered any amendments or substitute motions for promising citizen warrant articles to render them suitable for their approval and recommendation for a positive vote at ATM. The interest of Arlington’s leadership in housing affordability is apparently zero except insofar as it can enrich 40B developers.

p. 2-38 under the heading Open Space

Arlington has very limited Open Space about which residents are very concerned. The final sentence of this section should be changed to:

“It is recommended that no designated open space, and conservation lands will be made available for housing development.”

p. 2-35 under the heading CHAPTER 40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING
INVENTORY

This is a remarkably unhelpful and obfuscatory section of the draft Plan. Suffice to say that the section chooses to ignore the fact that Arlington is very close to the statutory “safe harbor” requirement of 1.5% area devoted to affordable units and instead expounds at length upon the alternative safe harbor yardstick of 10% of total housing units required to be affordable. The latter yardstick is essentially unattainable for communities as land-poor as Arlington and would necessitate Arlington being on an everlasting construction treadmill gobbling up parks and open space. Depending on whether Arlington were to use 40B construction or construction of apartments observing our Inclusionary Zoning bylaw, the additional 859 affordable units required to meet the 10% affordability yardstick would require Arlington to build between 5,000 and 15,000 additional units as is explained in WWW.ARFRR.ORG. It is inappropriate for the Consultants to suggest that we should do so. It would overwhelm schools and create an intolerable traffic situation. Instead the consultants should present a blueprint for finalizing our attainment of the 1.5% area statutory requirement by such methods as redefining the cemetery districts as non-residential and purchase; and renovation of our many existing Arlington residences for use as affordable units which has been successful in the past for both AHA and HCA.

p. 2-43 Under the heading Regulatory Constraints

The second paragraph misleadingly states that in 2021 the Town successfully adopted an ADU policy in the bylaw... “so long as the ADU or primary residence is occupied by the property owner or a family member of the property owner” (family member undefined). This is not true if the owner or owner-developer after initial ownership then sells the property—there is no requirement that the new owner or family member resides there – it can simply be an investment property and could exacerbate teardowns. There are almost no safeguards for the community in the ADU bylaw as promoted by the PD and if it is approved by the Attorney General it will be the worst ADU bylaw in Massachusetts. The specter of short term rentals is not adequately dealt with. The draft Housing Plan should be providing improved ADU concepts instead of endorsing flawed legislation.

In the third paragraph the draft Plan states that focus groups “suggested that local zoning does not allow for enough diversity of housing types.” (Who were these focus groups?) It is not wise to ignore the opposite conclusion of the Master Plan

approved by Town meeting (after documented input of hundreds of residents). The Master Plan emphasized the outstanding nature of the diversity of housing in Arlington which is much superior to that of other local towns. It also said that the housing that Arlington needs is affordable housing and senior housing both of which are given short shrift in the draft Plan.

p. 2-44 The final paragraph is an unsubstantiated and slanderous statement for which there is no evidence:

“regulatory barriers like those documented in Arlington...” What regulatory barriers? Where is the evidence for this statement?

“act as an impediment to creating affordable and equitable housing opportunities” Arlington’s leadership has opposed every attempt at Town Meeting in 202 to create affordable units. They are the major impediment – not some imaginary “regulatory barriers.”

“The legacy of Arlington’s past exclusionary practices is embedded in the town’s urban form and in laws that remain on the books.” What laws are the authors talking about? This is a defamatory and ridiculous statement.

“Addressing that legacy will require ongoing community conversation and openness to disagreement, and reforming laws on the basis of inclusion.” Actually housing policy and affordable housing policy and related conversations require HONESTY not distortions to increase profits for developers. Arlington’s zoning bylaw was reformed years ago to include an exemplary Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw. Recent attempts to expand the affordability provisions of that bylaw were opposed by the PD and town leadership. The Housing Plan should present a pathway for improved leadership in housing and affordable housing policy. One of the ongoing allegations of the PD relative to the false narrative of racism in Arlington’s housing history is their repeated accusations of redlining. This is simply wrong and the draft Plan should make that clear. The following communication I received from a constituent in my precinct should bring accuracy to redlining history:

In the past year I have heard past redlining lending practices mentioned frequently as a supporting reason for Arlington to adopt new zoning policies. Rarely does the discussion go into any depth of exactly what role redlining played in Arlington or even the greater Boston area.

Looking deeper into the available data, I found that there were 28 such

neighborhoods in the greater Boston area. Contrary to popular thought, race seems to have been a very minor factor in redlining decisions in Boston.

19 of the 28 redlined neighborhoods had zero Black population listed.

Of the other nine, the Black population was either 2% or 5% in six of them.

In only two of the neighborhoods did it seem that race was a major reason for redlining.

Large Italian populations were by far the leading ethnic factor cited as the reason for redlining, along with the threat of infiltration by Foreign and Jewish immigrants. Interestingly, Charlestown was redlined because of the 'infiltration' of large numbers of Canadiens (French-speaking people from Canada).

Arlington had no redlining.

If these and other mistakes in the draft Housing Plan are corrected it is to be hoped that Arlington will have a good Housing Plan.

Arlington Housing Plan

Housing Needs Assessment 08-2021

Prepared for the Town of Arlington



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 - Potential Barriers to Affordable Housing*
 3. Five-Year Housing Goals (not included in this draft)
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- Appendix (not included in this draft)

2. HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

KEY FINDINGS

- In response to demand for homeownership opportunities in the Boston area's exceptionally high-cost market, Arlington has slowly lost some of its rental supply, e.g., through condominium conversion of two-family homes.
- Arlington is attracting higher-income households as the Boston-Cambridge labor market is priced out of many suburbs inside and along Route 128, such as Lexington, Winchester, Belmont, and Brookline, and nearby cities such as Somerville.
- Non-elderly householders living alone are more common in Arlington than many of the affluent towns around it or the cities and towns Arlington tracks as comparison communities.¹ Throughout the Greater Boston area,² one-person households tend to be dominated by people 65 and over, but this is not the case in Arlington.
- Arlington has made small gains in racial or ethnic diversity, but still has very little racial or ethnic diversity overall. Additionally, Arlington is beginning to lose class diversity. Black or African Americans make up a much smaller percentage of the total population in Arlington than in the Greater Boston as a whole. The Latino population is also small, and even though Arlington has seen growth among Asian households and families, the overall picture of Arlington is that of White, middle- and upper-income homeowners.
- Neighborhoods within Arlington differ in terms of household, family, racial, and income characteristics. In some instances, significant differences are due to historically discriminatory housing policies of the past.
- Arlington is redeveloping. Most new single- and two-family housing construction in Arlington occurs due to demolition and replacement with larger or in any case, more valuable single-family homes. This is because Arlington's zoning allows single-family homes to be placed only by single-family homes. Redevelopment of older housing stock brings higher asset value to the community, but not necessarily a net increase in housing units. To a lesser extent, new housing growth in Arlington does occur in the form of multifamily infill opportunities, both market-rate and affordable.

¹ Belmont, Brookline, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Natick, Needham, North Andover, Reading, Stoneham, Watertown, and Winchester. Source: Town of Arlington Fiscal Year 2021 Town Manager's Annual Budget & Financial Plan.

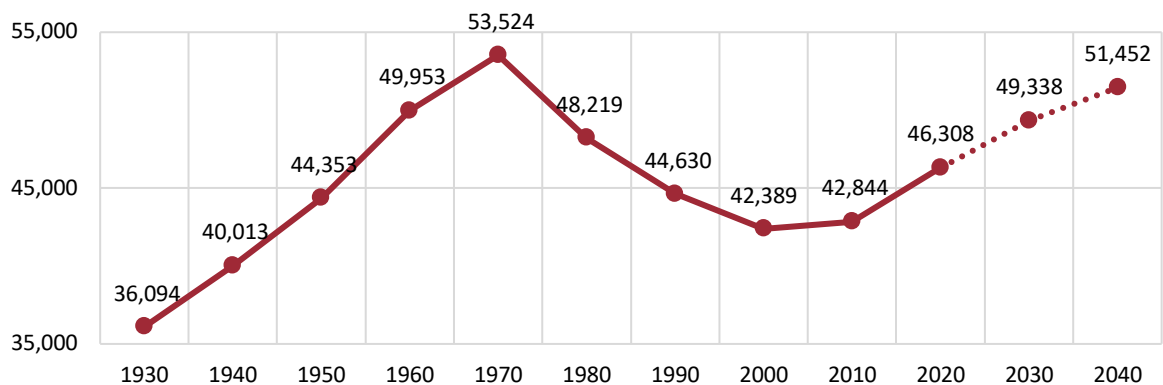
² In this Housing Plan, "Greater Boston" refers to the Boston Metropolitan Area, which generally includes the communities inside and along Interstate Route 495.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Arlington and the surrounding communities have absorbed modest population growth over the past few decades. Echoing Greater Boston trends, Arlington’s population growth rate accelerated with the “Baby Boom,” only to reverse with fairly steep population declines from 1970-2000 as household sizes fell throughout the U.S. The Route 128-area suburbs also lost population to the tremendous household growth that occurred following the completion of Interstate Route 495 during the 1960s. Since 1990, however, Arlington has been gaining residents again, approximating the rate of growth occurring elsewhere in Middlesex County.

Figure 2.1. Arlington Population, 1930-2040

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau & UMass Donahue Institute V2018 Projections



In August 2021, the Census Bureau released Arlington’s official Census 2020 population, 46,308 – up 8.1 percent since 2010 and indicating a more significant population increase than the 1.1 percent the town saw from 2000-2010. Arlington’s growth lags narrowly behind that of Middlesex County, which gained more new residents than any county in the Commonwealth, capping the decade with 8.6 percent population growth.³

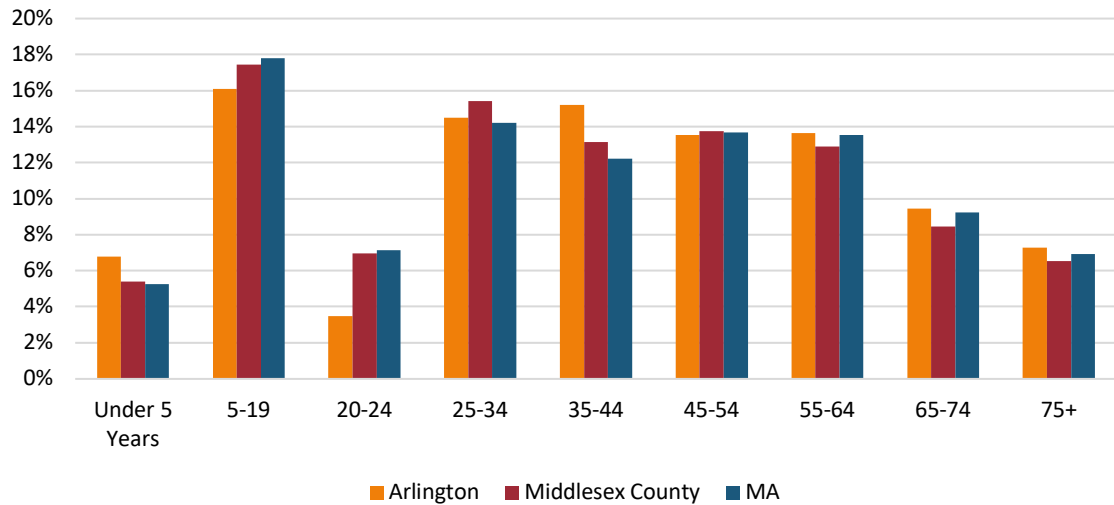
Population Age

Arlington’s population breakdown by age differs from both the county and state in some age brackets and fares similarly in others (Figure 2.2). In particular, Arlington’s share of children under 5 and residents over 65 exceeds both the county and state, but the percent of residents in the 20-24 age bracket is significantly lower; this is likely influenced by several factors, including the high cost of housing in Arlington; the town’s attractiveness to families and long-term residents in older-adult age ranges; and the fact that Arlington’s amenities or transportation services—features that lure young householders—are not competitive with those offered in surrounding communities.⁴

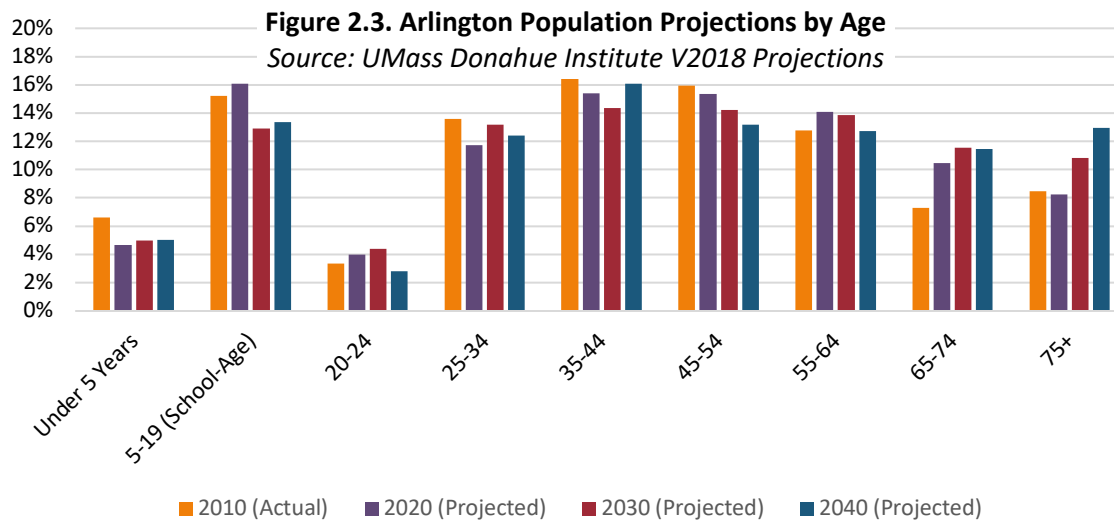
³ U.S. Bureau of the Census (Census Bureau), Decennial Census P.L. 94-171 Redistricting Data, August 12, 2021. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/rdo/summary-files.html>. Since a majority of Arlington’s HPP has been prepared prior to the release of Census 2020 data, this draft cites only the town’s total decennial population growth. All other data from the Census Bureau referred to in this draft is based on the 2015-2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates unless noted otherwise.

⁴ Participants in small group interviews and an initial project kick-off questionnaire indicated that Arlington’s housing market is extremely competitive and hard to break into, more so than in the past. While this problem is not unique to Arlington, it may have accelerated.

Figure 2.2. Population Distribution by Age
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019, Table B01001



The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute (UMDI) predicts that over the next two decades, Arlington's total population will continue to grow even as the age make-up of the population changes. Most notably, by 2040 the town may witness significant growth among older adults and, to a lesser extent, the 35-to-44 age cohort.⁵



⁵ UMass Donahue Institute v2018 Projections. Note: neither source should be used to forecast K-12 enrollments or demand for services such as elder programming at the Arlington Senior Center. They are not designed for such purposes.

Race, Ethnicity, and Culture

Despite its proximity to Cambridge and Boston, Arlington has limited racial and ethnic diversity. The recently released Census 2020 redistricting profiles are largely consistent with the intercensal demographic estimates the Census Bureau has published annually since 2010. Today, racial and ethnic minorities comprise about 20 percent of the town's total population (Figure 2.4), with Asians making up a larger proportion (12 percent) than all other non-White groups combined and over half of all foreign-born residents. The Latino community, which is primarily White, represents about five percent

of Arlington's total population. By contrast, the Black or African American population in Arlington is quite small: 2.3 percent of the total. As the upcoming Map 2.1 illustrates, the make-up of Arlington neighborhoods differs quite a bit, with a larger proportion of minority residents in East Arlington and Arlington Center.

Figure 2.4. Arlington in 2020

Source: Census 2020

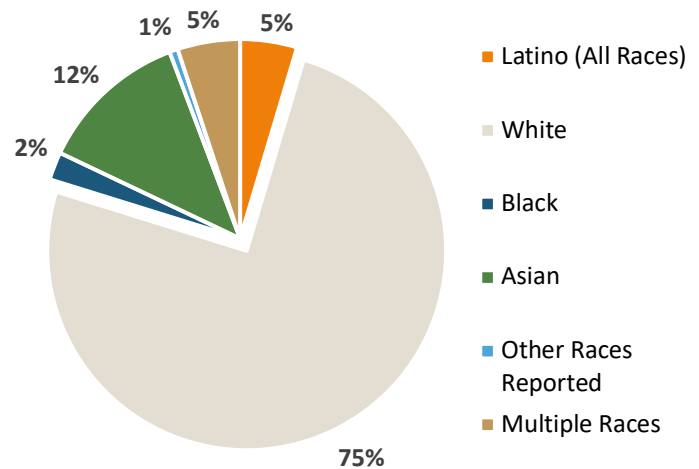


Table 2.1. 20 Years of Population, Race, and Ethnicity Change in Arlington, 2000-2020

	Census 2020	Percent 2020 Total	Census 2010	Census 2000	Percent Change 2000-2020
Total Population	46,308	100%	42,844	42,389	9.2%
Latino (All Races)	2,137	4.6%	1,395	787	171.5%
White	34,813	75.2%	35,804	38,058	-8.5%
Black	1,052	2.3%	981	690	52.5%
AI/AN	28	0.1%	29	46	-39.1%
Asian	5,642	12.2%	3,541	2,096	169.2%
NH/PI	6	0.0%	7	4	50.0%
Other Race	282	0.6%	178	112	151.8%
Multiple Races	2,348	5.1%	909	596	294.0%

Source: Boston Globe, Aug. 12, 2021.

Almost 20 percent of Arlington's current population immigrated to the United States, and just under half of the foreign-born population are now U.S. citizens. Consistent with the racial make-up of the population today, 52 percent of the foreign-born population immigrated from

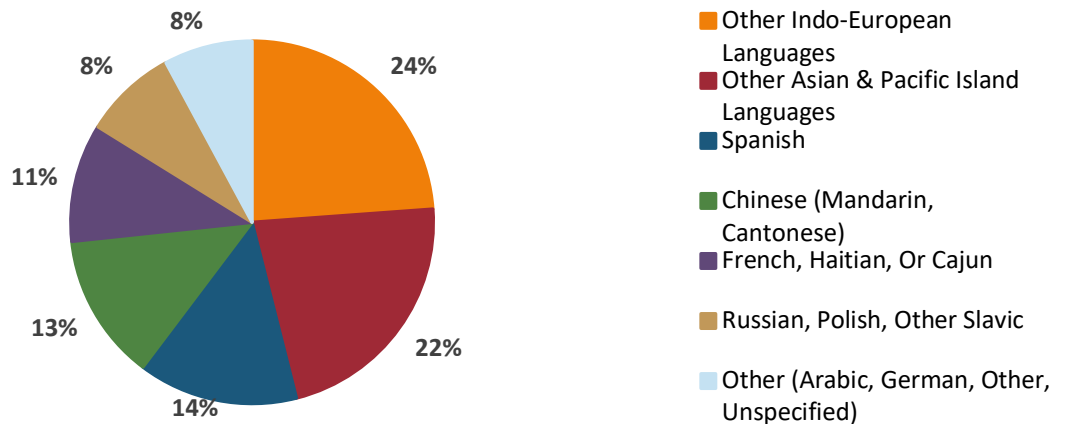
an Asian country, primarily China, India, or the Philippines. Central and South American also comprise a significant portion of Arlington’s foreign-born residents.⁶

Table 2.2. Place of Birth for Current Residents			
	Arlington	Middlesex County	State
Total	45,304	1,600,842	6,850,553
Born in U.S.	80.4%	78.6%	83.2%
Born in Mass.	64.1%	69.0%	72.5%
Born Elsewhere in U.S.	33.6%	28.4%	24.0%
Foreign-Born	19.6%	21.4%	16.8%
U.S. Citizen	48.0%	49.8%	53.4%
Not a U.S. Citizen	52.0%	50.2%	46.6%
Source: ACS 2015-2019.			

Language plays a crucial role in preserving and defining a community’s culture. About 20 percent of Arlington’s population five years and over (8,777) speaks a language other than English at home, 73 percent of whom report good bilingual skills. Residents who speak Tagalog or German at home were the most likely to identify as speaking English “very well” (100 percent and 94.2 percent, respectively), and Chinese and Korean speakers were the least likely (56.2 percent and 62.9 percent, respectively).⁷ Arlington EATS, a nonprofit food pantry providing food to 270 Arlington households each week,⁸ reports that Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, and Spanish are the languages most commonly used to interface with guests with limited English proficiency.⁹

Figure 2.5. Non-English Languages Spoken at Home in Arlington

Source: Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019, Table B01001



⁶ Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (ACS 2015-2019), B05002. Place Of Birth by Nativity and Citizenship Status, and B05006. Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population in The United States.

⁷ ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019, Table C16001

⁸ Arlington EATS Mission & History, <https://www.arlingtoneats.org/mission-history/>. Accessed August 13, 2021.

⁹ Email correspondence with Arlington EATS; May 26, 2021.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the languages spoken at home in Arlington, as reported by the Census Bureau, and suggests that Arlington benefits from the presence of many cultural traditions.

Geographic Mobility

Eighty-eight percent of Arlington residents live in the same residence as a year ago, which is within the range for the communities Arlington normally tracks for financial and other comparison purposes.¹⁰ Of the remaining twelve percent of Arlington residents not in the same residence as a year ago, 7.7 percent moved from a different Massachusetts city or town, 2.8 percent moved from a different state, and 1.5 percent immigrated from abroad.¹¹

Arlington's Children: Race and Ethnicity in Arlington Public Schools

The Arlington Public Schools provide a PreK-12 education to children living in Arlington and approximately 82 METCO students.¹² Last year (2020-2021), 30.1 percent of Arlington's public school students were racial or ethnic minorities – noticeably higher than the town-wide percentage of minorities – but the statistics vary by school just as they vary by neighborhood. In general, the district-wide percentage of minorities has gradually increased, mainly among Asian students. However, the percentage of lower-income students in Arlington from 11.0 in 2010 to percent to 9.1 percent in 2020, a trend reflected during interviews with longer-term residents who have noted Arlington's decreasing economic diversity.

Table 2.3. Arlington Public School Enrollment by Student Indicators Tracked by the Commonwealth					
Year	Total Enrolled	Change From Previous Year	Minority Population	English Language Learner	Low Income Status
2010-11	4,808	n/a	21.7%	5.0%	11.0%
2011-12	4,858	1.0%	22.3%	5.3%	11.5%
2012-13	4,903	0.9%	20.4%	4.8%	11.5%
2013-14	5,020	2.4%	20.3%	4.1%	11.5%
2014-15	5,208	3.8%	25.5%	4.0%	8.4%
2015-16	5,304	1.8%	25.4%	4.1%	8.3%
2016-17	5,524	4.2%	26.7%	4.4%	8.0%
2017-18	5,711	3.4%	28.0%	4.8%	8.2%
2018-19	5,939	4.0%	29.0%	4.8%	8.4%
2019-20	6,047	1.8%	29.5%	5.0%	8.8%
2020-21	5,755	-4.8%	30.1%	4.1%	9.1%

Source: MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. It is not clear if some of the decrease in 2020-21 has to do with the transfer of some students to private schools or home schooling because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Statistics reported by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provide some evidence that the number of English Language Learners (ELL) is a much

¹⁰ Belmont, Brookline, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Natick, Needham, North Andover, Reading, Stoneham, Watertown, and Winchester. (this should be much earlier in the document)

¹¹ ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019, Table B07001

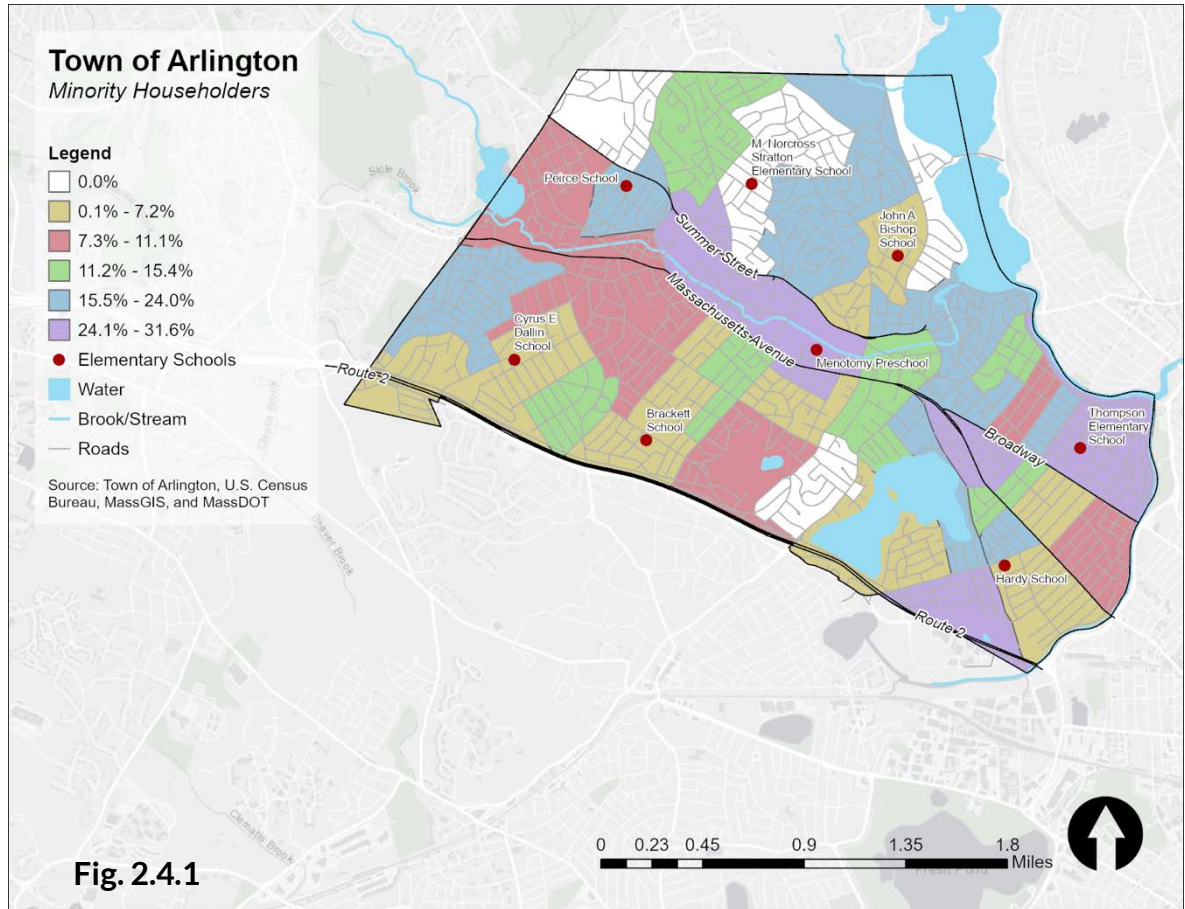
¹² METCO, "Partner Districts." Accessed at <https://metcoinc.org/partner-districts/> on August 13, 2021.

greater challenge for adults than children in Arlington, as is often the case. DESE reports that while 12 percent of the K-12 student population hail from non-English speaking families, only four percent meet the definition of “English language learners,” i.e., children who struggle with ordinary classwork in English.¹³ Table 2.2 compares district-wide student indicators over several years, followed by a closer look at the town’s seven elementary schools.

Since Arlington’s elementary schools function partially as neighborhood schools, the differences between them shed some light on where minority, ELL, and lower-income students and their families reside. These statistics are reported by school for the 2020-21 school year. Of Arlington’s seven elementary schools, Stratton Elementary (8.0 percent *higher* minority population than district) and Dallin Elementary (4.7 percent *lower* minority population than district) deviate the most from the district’s overall demographic profile. The location of each public elementary school in Arlington is shown in Fig 2.4.1 (supplement to Table 2.4) which also indicates the percent minority households by **census block group**. It is important to note that Arlington also has several private schools, both religious and secular. Comparable demographic information for these schools is not available.

Table 2.4. Selected Student Indicators by Public School in Arlington (2020-21)				
School	Total Enrolled	Minority Population	English Language Learner	Lower- Income Students
Arlington High (Gr. 9-12)	1,409	25.8%	1.1%	9.1%
Ottoson Middle (Gr. 7-8)	892	28.4%	2.1%	10.8%
Gibbs (Gr. 6)	483	30.8%	2.7%	10.4%
Stratton (Gr. 1-5)	446	38.1%	9.2%	8.3%
Thompson (Gr. 1-5)	479	37.2%	7.9%	16.3%
Peirce (Gr. 1-5)	305	34.4%	7.5%	6.9%
Hardy (Gr. 1-5)	405	32.3%	9.1%	7.2%
John Bishop (Gr. 1-5)	381	31.5%	5.8%	5.0%
Brackett (Gr. 1-5)	465	27.3%	3.0%	2.8%
Cyrus Dallin (Gr. 1-5)	425	25.4%	3.1%	6.4%
Menotomy Preschool (Pre-K)	65	41.5%	N/A	21.5%
Source: MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School Profiles, Arlington.				

¹³ Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), School Profile Series, Arlington Public Schools, June 2021.



Educational Attainment and Labor Force

Educational attainment is one of several measures that separates the Greater Boston suburbs from the rest of the state and even more from the rest of the nation. Arlington residents are well educated, with over 70 percent of Arlington adults 25 years and over holding at least a bachelor's degree and over 40 percent hold a graduate or professional degree. Table 2.5 reinforces just how different Arlington is from Middlesex County and Massachusetts as a whole. While the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree is not that much higher in Arlington, it is the percentage of people with advanced degrees – master's, professional, and doctoral degrees – that distinguishes Arlington.

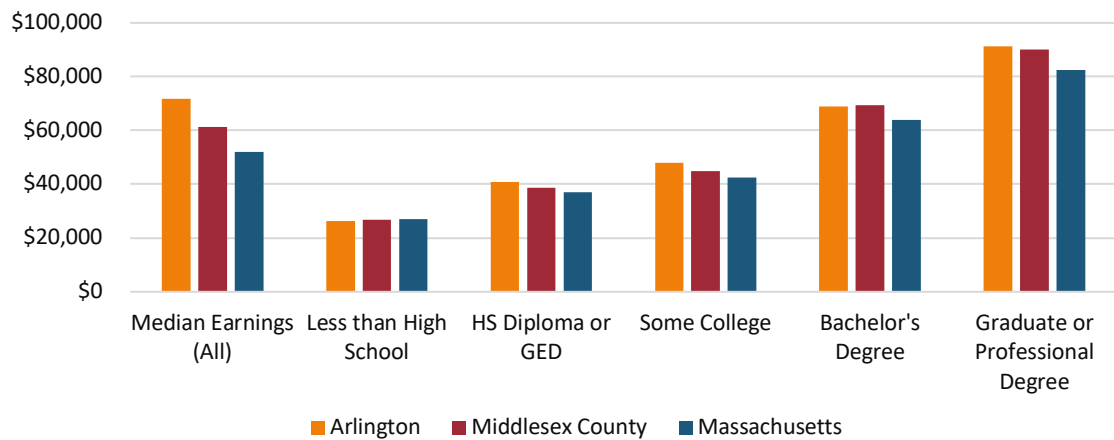
Table 2.5. Educational Attainment in Arlington, Population 25 Years and Over					
	High School without Diploma	High School Diploma	College without Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
Arlington	3.4%	12.3%	13.5%	29.9%	41.0%
Middlesex County	6.6%	19.0%	18.1%	27.5%	28.8%
Massachusetts	9.2%	24.0%	23.0%	24.1%	19.6%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019.

A community's **labor force** includes all civilian residents 16 years and over with a job or in the market for one. Arlington's labor force includes approximately 26,300 people, 97 percent of whom are employed. Living in Arlington offers highly skilled and highly educated workers access to good jobs in the Boston-Cambridge-Waltham network of academic, health care, biomedical research, and other high-tech organization, both public and private. This can be seen in the typical earnings power of Arlington residents compared with their counterparts elsewhere in the state, as shown in Figure 2.6. As discussed in the next section, the earnings power of Arlington residents has a direct bearing on the town's household wealth.

Figure 2.6. Median Earnings by Employed Resident by Educational Attainment

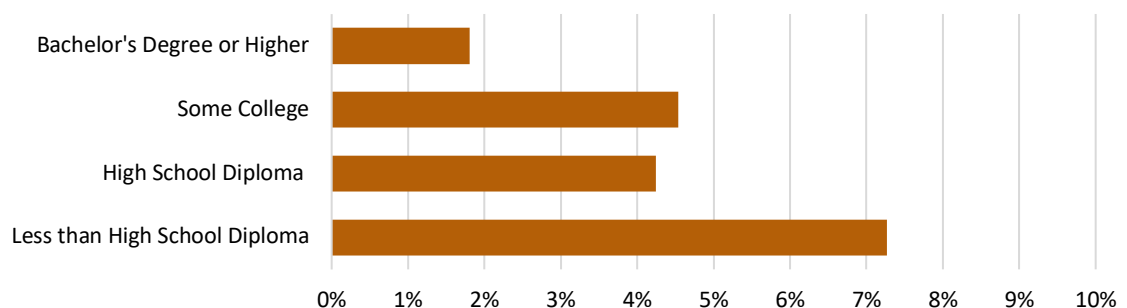
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019



Unemployment is also more likely to hinder self-sufficiency among people with lower educational attainment. Figure 2.7 illustrates the relationship between education levels and unemployment in Arlington. These statistics are indicative of the challenges people face trying to live in Arlington (or any other community) without high enough earnings potential to find decent, suitable, affordably priced housing.

Figure 2.7. Arlington Unemployment by Educational Attainment

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019



Disability

As of 2019, an estimated 4,031 Arlington residents have one or more **disabilities**, defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. Consistent with countywide and statewide disability population characteristics, seniors 75 and over in Arlington are much more likely to have at least one disability than people in younger age cohorts. The most common disability challenges faced by people 75 and over are mobility impairments and safe-care limitations, which point to needs for both barrier-free dwellings and in-home or residential services affordable to a population that often has the lowest incomes of all householders in a community.

Table 2.6. Percent Population with Disability by Age Group			
	Arlington	Middlesex County	Massachusetts
Total Population	45,065	1,586,008	6,777,468
Population with Disabilities	4,031	147,133	784,593
Percent Total Population with Disabilities	8.9%	9.3%	11.6%
Under 18 Years	1.9%	3.6%	4.5%
18 To 34 Years	3.6%	4.6%	6.0%
35 To 64 Years	5.9%	7.6%	10.6%
65 To 74 Years	18.8%	18.3%	21.3%
75+ Years	49.9%	45.3%	46.5%
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019			

HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

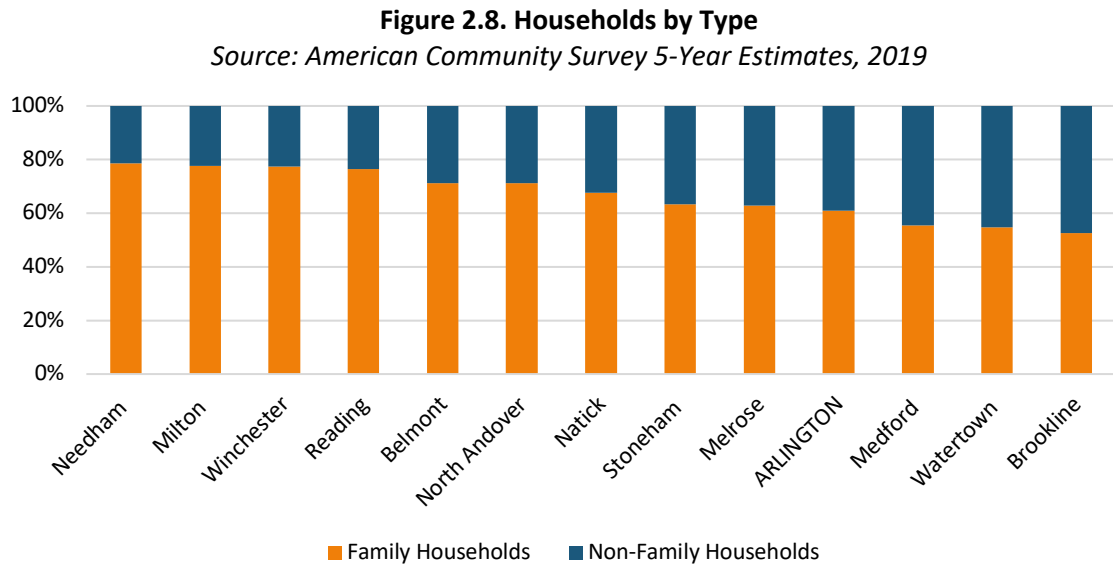
Discussions around demographic shifts tend to focus on population, but for purposes of assessing a community's housing needs, growth and change in **households** is more important than changes in population alone. This is because households, not population, drive the demand for housing. The housing needs and preferences of households vary by age group, household size, commuting distances, access to goods and services, and clearly, what people can afford for rent or a mortgage payment. The size and composition of a community's households often indicate how well suited the existing housing inventory is to residents. In turn, the number and type of households and their spending power influence overall demand for housing.

Households and Families

The Census Bureau divides households into two broad classes: families and non-families. In federal census terms, a **family** household includes two or more related people living together in the same housing unit, and a **non-family** household can be a single person living alone or two or more unrelated people living together.¹⁴ As of 2019, Arlington had an estimated 19,065

¹⁴ Local populations not included in any type of household are reported as "group quarters" residents, or people in some kind of institutional or non-instructional setting. For suburbs, the most common types of group quarters include

households, with non-families comprising almost 40 percent of the total. Compared to its peer communities, Arlington's family household rate of 61 percent is somewhat low, as indicated in Figure 2.8. As for family *type*, married couples make up a large share of all families – 82 percent, and 47 percent married with children.



Household Size & Composition

Arlington's households are on the smaller side among Greater Boston cities and towns. About 20 percent of its households (including families and nonfamilies) include four or more people. Today, the Census Bureau estimates that Arlington's average household includes 2.4 people and that almost half of all families in Arlington are two-person households. Still, census estimates indicate that since 2010, household sizes in several Boston-area suburbs, including Arlington, appear to be increasing again concurrent with growth in the region's household formation rate. Three- and four-person households comprise 46 percent of all households in Arlington. Large families (more than five people) account for a very small percentage of all families living in Arlington today.¹⁵ By contrast, single people living alone make up some 32 percent of all Arlington households and 82 percent of all nonfamily households. Among Arlington's 6,080 one-person households, 43 percent are older adults (65 and over), lower than most of its peer communities (Figure 2.9). While householders over 65 living alone make up 14 percent of Arlington's total households, they are the cohort most affected by cost burdened, as described later in the Housing Affordability section of this Needs Assessment.

nursing homes and group residences for people with disabilities. Some suburbs close to Boston and Cambridge also have college student dormitories, notably the City of Newton and the towns of Weston and Wellesley. Arlington has a very small group quarters population currently estimated at 320 people.

¹⁵ ACS 2015-2019, B19123. Family Size by Cash Public Assistance Income or Households Receiving Food Stamps/Snap Benefits in the Past 12 Months.

Figure 2.9. Age of Householder Living Alone by Age
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019

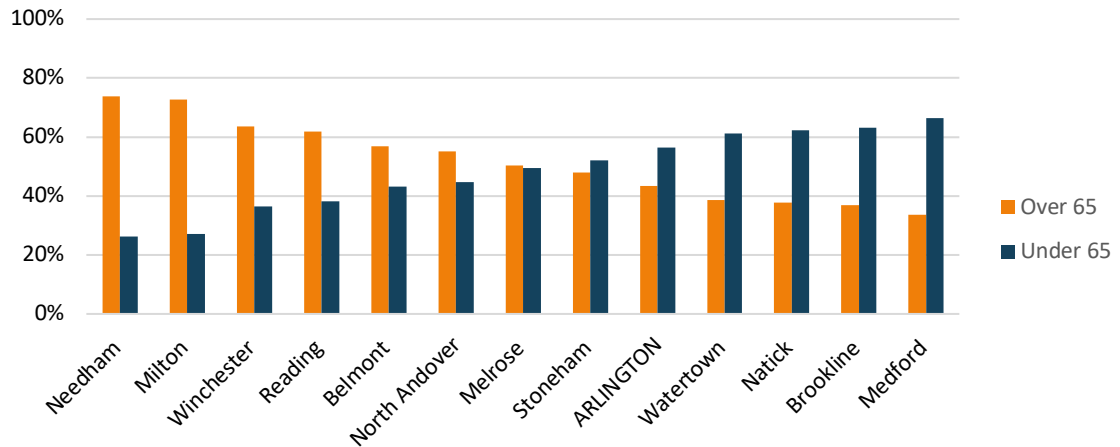
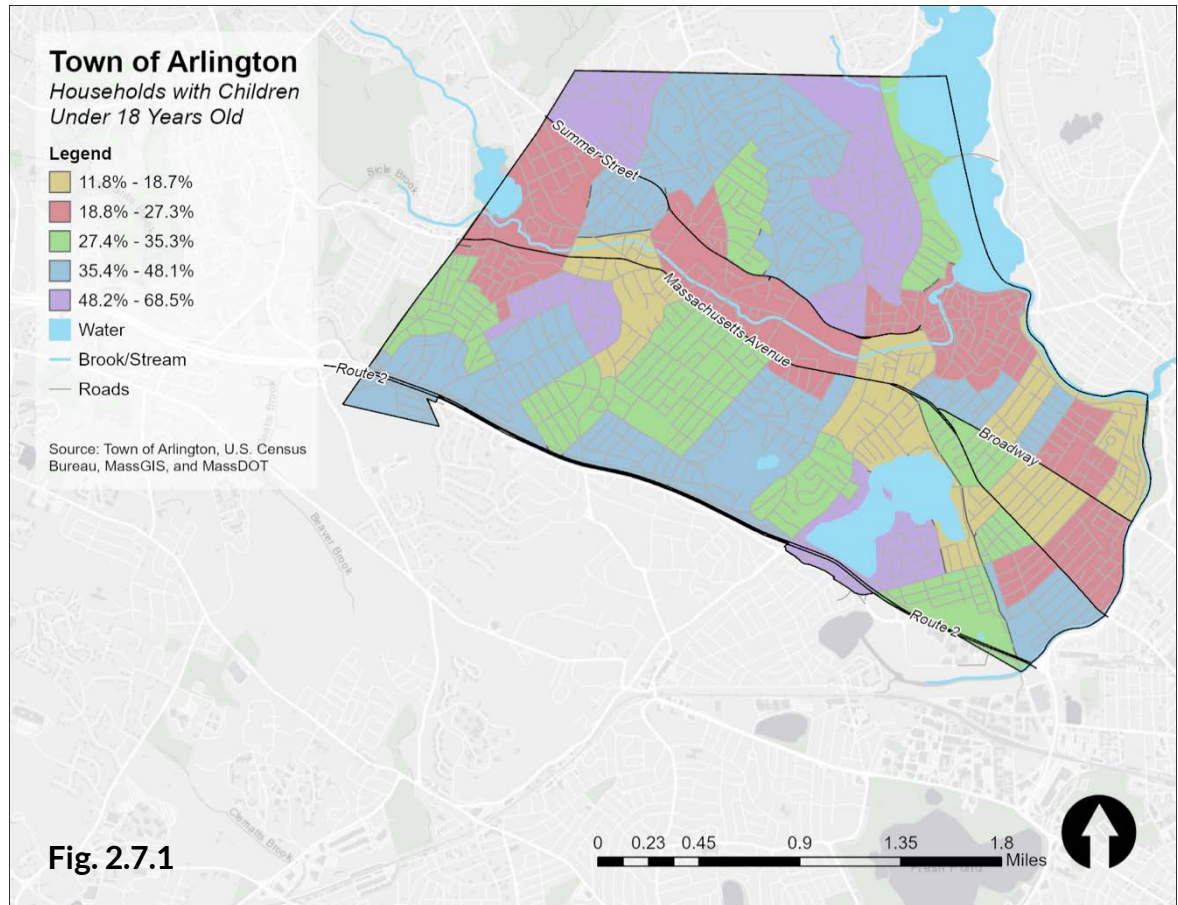


Table 2.7. Households by Presence of People under 18 Year

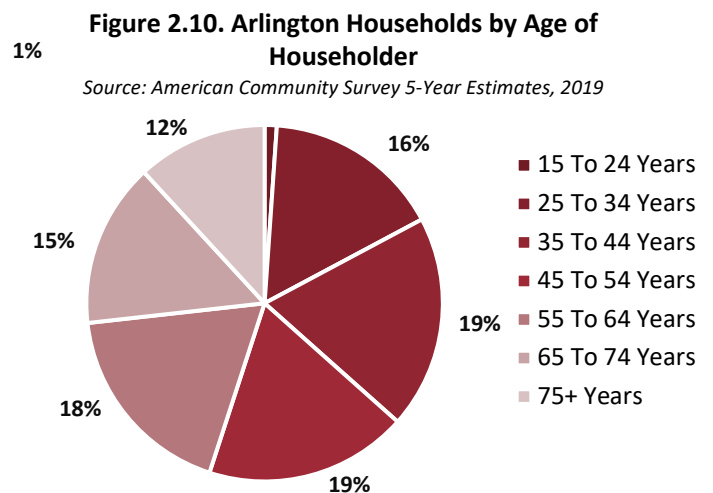
	Households with People <18 Years	Percent	Households with No People <18 Years	Percent
Total All Households: 19,065				
Total by Type	5,812	30.5%	13,253	69.5%
Family Households	5,774	99.3%	5,840	44.1%
Married-Couple Family	4,649	80.0%	4,876	36.8%
Other Family:	1,125	19.4%	964	7.3%
Single Parent, Male	135	2.3%	294	2.2%
Single Parent, Female	990	17.0%	670	5.1%
Nonfamily Households	38	0.7%	7,413	55.9%
Male Householder	38	0.7%	2,718	20.5%
Female Householder	0	0.0%	4,695	35.4%
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019				

Approximately 31 percent of Arlington's 19,065 households have one or more people under 18, and as shown in Table 2.7, almost all of them are family households. About 20 percent of the families with dependent children in Arlington are single parents. There are many more households living in Arlington with no children, including both householders of childrearing age and older adults. Fig. 2.7.1 (which accompanies Table 2.7) shows the geographic distribution of children under 18 in Arlington.



Age of Arlington Householders

The distribution of Arlington households by age cohort is not much different than the make-up of households in nearby suburbs, both inside and along Route 128. The most noticeable differences between Arlington and communities like Winchester or Milton is that the higher household wealth found in those towns tends to correlate with lower percentages of young households (under 34 years) and sustained growth in the percentage of households in their highest earnings years (35 to 54).



In many cases—and Arlington is no exception—the towns right around Boston often have trouble supporting age-in-place or age-in-community policies. This is due in part to housing costs, the composition of the housing in older, substantially developed suburbs surrounding

Boston and Cambridge, and the location of housing in relation to easily accessible goods and services. Still, it is worth noting that relative to most Greater Boston towns with demographic qualities generally similar to Arlington, there are only three with percentages of 75-and-over households smaller than in Arlington: Medford, Brookline, and Natick. One explanation for this is the dramatic growth in age-restricted developments (with or without on-site services) in the region's well-off suburbs. Arlington has some age-restricted or age-targeted housing, but not as much as many of its neighbors.

Household Wealth

Household income influences where people live, their health care and quality of life, and the opportunities they can offer their children. Arlington's desirability today is tied in part to its rising household wealth. In-migration of higher-income households and families is a relatively recent trend in Arlington that has accelerated in recent years. In small group interviews and during the first community forum for this process, long-time residents recalled Arlington as having more of a mix of incomes and household types. As households and families find themselves priced out of Somerville and Cambridge—places that still had some affordability not that long ago—Arlington has become an attractive option for people who cannot afford Winchester or Belmont but want close access to Boston-Cambridge employment.¹⁶

Table 2.8 offers a snapshot of three median income indicators—all households, family households, and non-family households—that have an important place in any conversation about housing affordability. The table shows that compared to the towns and cities Arlington considers its peer group, Arlington falls about in the middle in terms of median household and median family income. However, the nonfamily median income in Arlington exceeds that of most peer group towns, likely because Arlington's one-person households include a broader mix of ages than most of its peer communities (Figure 2.9 above) – and therefore income levels.¹⁷ Single people of all ages over 24 years can be found among the living-alone population, both for homeowners and renters.

Table 2.8. Household and Family Income Snapshot: Arlington and Peer Group Communities			
Town	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Median Nonfamily Income
Winchester	\$169,623	\$217,633	\$60,450
Needham	\$165,547	\$194,596	\$56,875
Milton	\$133,718	\$159,860	\$41,729
Reading	\$132,731	\$157,061	\$52,083
Belmont	\$129,380	\$167,058	\$62,854
Brookline	\$117,326	\$158,770	\$75,227
Natick	\$115,545	\$153,925	\$61,210
ARLINGTON	\$108,389	\$145,141	\$62,080

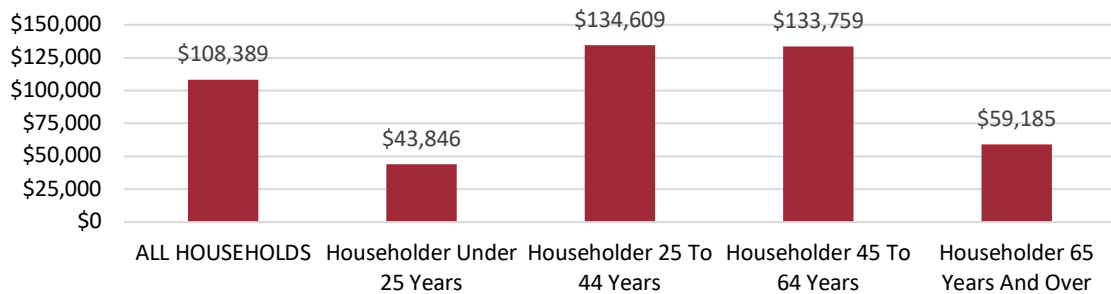
¹⁶ These qualities and reasons for moving to Arlington were identified in small group interviews.

¹⁷In general, elderly seniors (75 years and over) incomes tend to be very low (especially among women) as compared to the larger community in which they reside.

Town	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Median Nonfamily Income
North Andover	\$108,070	\$139,191	\$44,955
Melrose	\$106,955	\$147,237	\$50,355
Stoneham	\$101,549	\$133,401	\$46,799
Watertown	\$101,103	\$119,411	\$80,954
Medford	\$96,455	\$117,348	\$70,992
Source: ACS 2015-2019, SE:A14006, SE:A14010, and SE:A14012, Social Explorer (SE) format.			

Figure 2.11. Median Household Income by Age of Householder

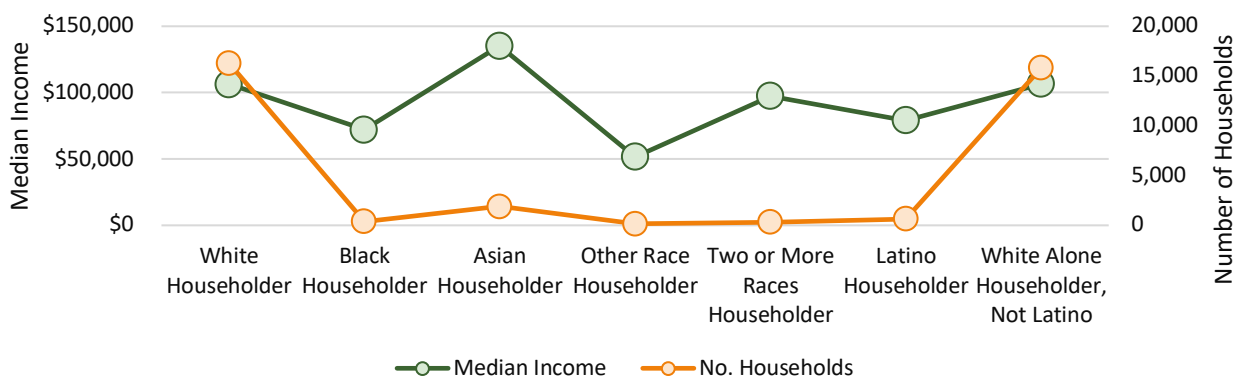
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019



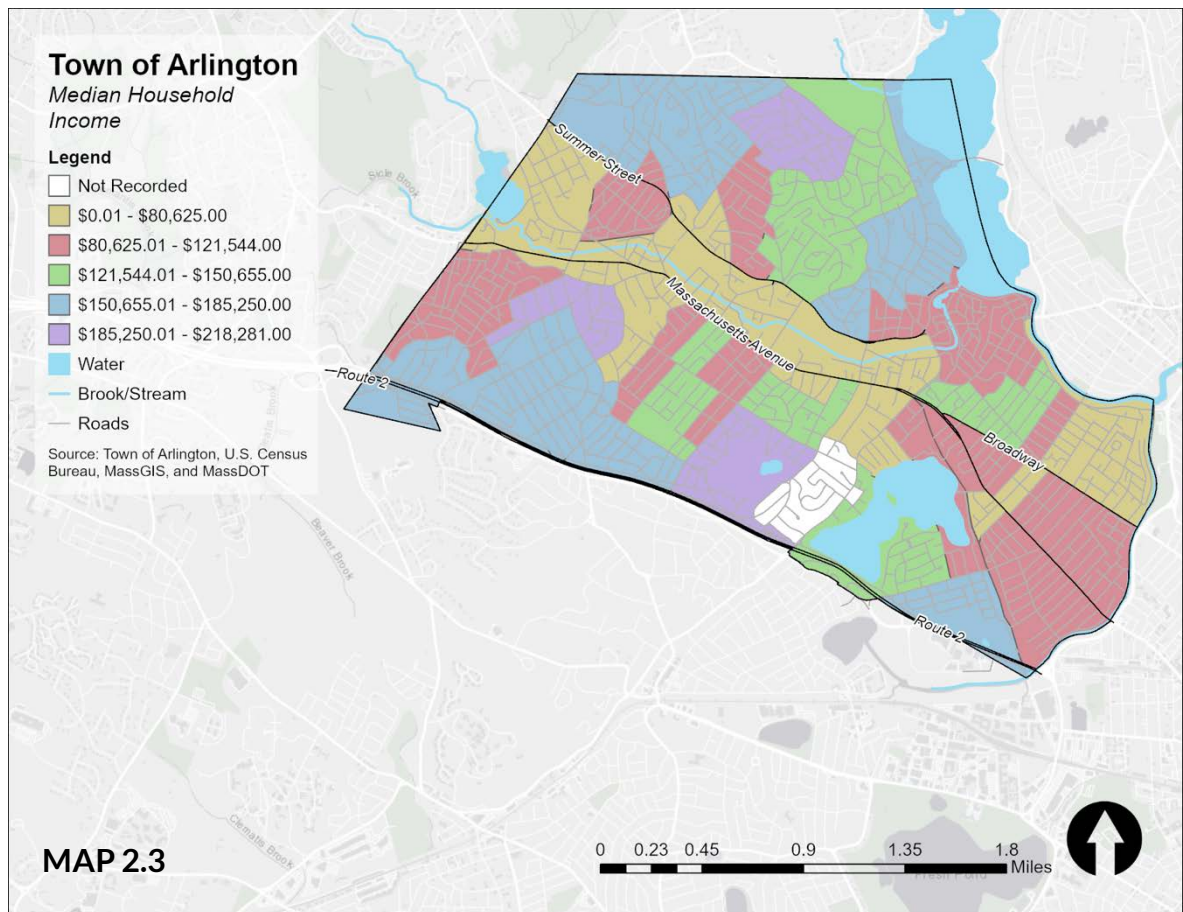
The median household income varies depending on age of householder, with householders under 25 (\$43,846) and householders over 65 (\$59,185) generally earning significantly less than householders 25 to 64 (Figure 2.11). Median income statistics are indicative of a community's relative economic position, but they also can mask differences in household wealth and differences in the relationship between household type, age (see Figure 2.11 above), or race and income. The next chart (Figure 2.12) compares the median household income by race with the number of households by race in Arlington. It reinforces that the vast majority of household wealth in Arlington is held by White households, for even though the median household income of Asian households is higher, the percentage of Asian households is much smaller.

Figure 2.12. Median Household Income by Race and Ethnicity

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019



Map 2.3 further reinforces that difference in household incomes exists in Arlington at the neighborhood level, with higher-income households generally found in the Arlington Heights and Turkey Hill areas and lower incomes in East Arlington and portions of Arlington Center. It is important to note that as housing units available to renters in the past converts to for-sale housing, e.g., condominium conversions, the household incomes in neighborhoods with large numbers of two-family buildings will most likely shift upward.



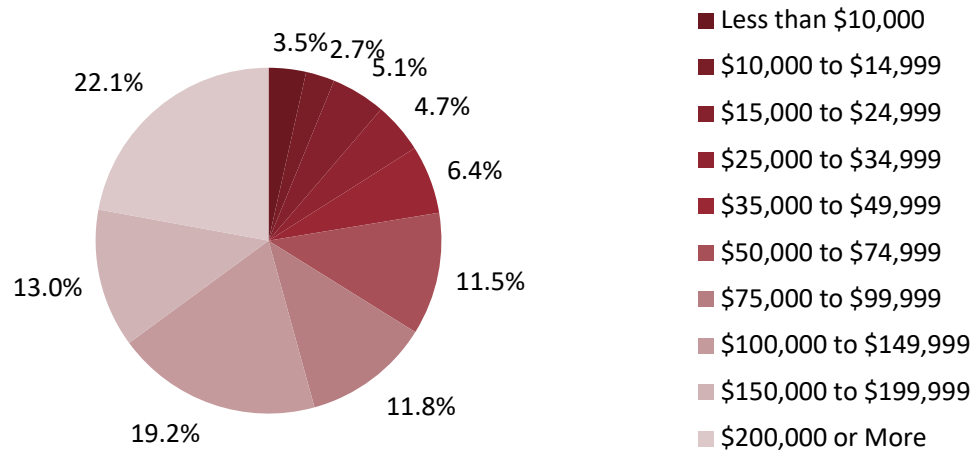
Households Income Distribution

Town-wide, approximately 35 percent of all households in Arlington have incomes over \$150,000. The proportion of lower-income households in Arlington has slowly dropped over 20 years as the town has become increasingly attractive to younger urban, economically mobile workers.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 29 percent of all households in Arlington have low or moderate incomes (LMI), i.e., incomes at or below 80 percent of the median family income for the Boston Metro Area. Over time, the portion of lower-income households has dropped somewhat in Arlington, from about 35 percent in 2000 to 29 percent today.

Figure 2.13. Arlington Household Income Distribution

Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2019



Families and Poverty

There is a significant difference between low incomes and **poverty**. “Low income” is a metric that allows housing analysts to compare household incomes in a given city or town to the economic region in which the community is located. The term is also used to determine eligibility for many types of affordable housing assistance. Poverty, on the other hand, is a standard for comparing communities, regions, and states to federal *thresholds* that measure the basic cost of food, shelter, clothing, and utilities, variable by household type and composition and the age of the householder. Arlington’s family poverty rate is slightly higher today than it was ten years ago, but the poverty rate for families with children has essentially remained the same.¹⁸ In general, poverty has not been as significant in Arlington as the incidence of low or moderate household incomes.

Table 2.9. Arlington Families with Incomes Below Poverty Level

Year		Arlington	Middlesex County	Massachusetts
2009	All Families	2.5%	4.9%	7.0%
	Families with Children	1.6%	3.5%	5.4%
2014	All Families	2.0%	5.7%	8.3%
	Families with Children	1.0%	4.0%	6.3%
2019	All Families	3.1%	4.6%	7.0%
	Families with Children	1.6%	3.2%	5.0%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019

¹⁸ ACS 2015-2019. To report poverty in population and household tables, the Census Bureau compares household incomes to national poverty thresholds. The result is that households in Northern states tend to have lower percentages of poverty than households in the South, though these long-standing geographic differences have begun to close somewhat in high-growth states in the South and Southwest.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Arlington has approximately 20,207 housing units. They include a mix of unit types, from detached single-family to larger apartment buildings, and just under half of all units in Arlington pre-date 1940 when the federal census first collected and reported information about the nation's housing supply. Many of the newer single-family homes in town are replacements of older dwellings that homebuyers wanted to enlarge and modernize, although some have been built on newly split existing lots. While these (and other) development trends are discussed further in the next section, the amount of net-new housing in Arlington is quite limited and indicates that Arlington is in a phase of redevelopment.

Housing Type and Age

Arlington's homes vary in size, age, and condition by neighborhood. In the single-family districts, the redevelopment process has usually produced homes that are larger than the ones they replaced, but for neighbors, it is often the lot disturbances – lost trees or landscaping, for example – that have an immediate, visible impact on their street. Still, assessor's data reveal not only useful information about housing values and types, but also sizes (in residential floor area), number of rooms, and a host of other information about style and structure trends, including housing age. The following analysis is based on the most recently available assessor's records (2021).

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

As shown in Table 2.10, suburban redevelopment has ushered into Arlington a generation of larger, more expensive single-family homes. For current Arlington homeowners, this means that their homes have appreciated significantly in value. However, for young buyers and renters hoping to find a home or condominium they can afford, Arlington sale prices have skyrocketed even more than was anticipated in the Master Plan just six years ago. Demolition and rebuild projects will continue in Arlington in neighborhoods with older homes because the land is worth more than the existing residences (expressed in Table 2.10 as a land-value ratio).

Table 2.10. Change in Size and Values in Arlington's Single-Family Home Inventory					
Age of Dwelling (Year Built)	Number of Records	Average Lot (Sq. Ft.)	Average Residential Floor Area (Sq. Ft.)	Average No. Rooms	Average Ratio of Land Value to Building Value
2000 to Present	292	8,294	3,334	8	0.680
1980-1999	211	7,903	2,451	7	1.090
1960-1979	753	7,510	2,026	7	1.578
1945-1960	2,427	7,751	1,912	6	1.735
1920-1944	3,237	6,353	1,892	7	1.476
1900-1919	752	7,553	2,136	8	1.331
1865-1899	248	8,215	2,283	8	1.320
Pre-1865	81	11,422	2,389	8	1.585
Source: Arlington's Assessor's Parcel Database (2021) and Barrett Planning Group LLC.					

TWO- AND THREE- FAMILY HOMES

Ninety-two percent of Arlington's 2,295 two- and three- family homes were built before 1945 compared to 54 percent of the town's single-family homes. Generally, these structures have a larger building footprint (2,767 sq ft on average) compared to Arlington's single-family homes (2,018 sq ft on average) and a smaller lot size (5,710 sq ft on average for 2- and 3-family homes compared to 7,218 sq ft).

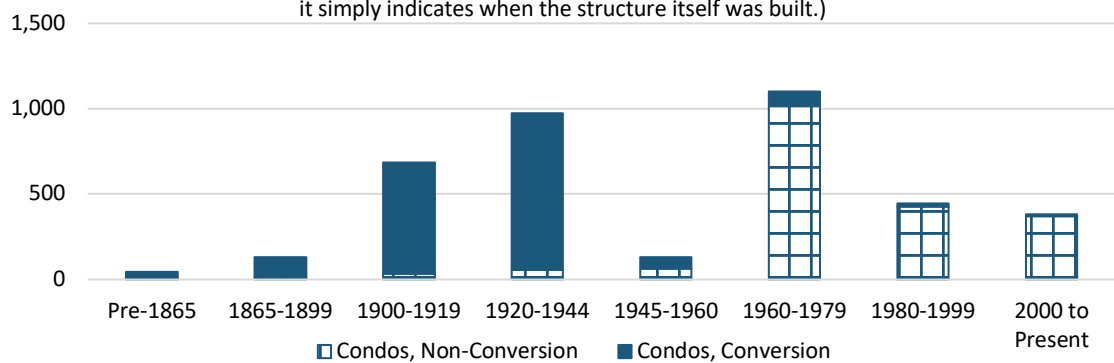
CONDOMINIUMS

Twenty-eight percent of Arlington's current condominium stock was built between 1960 and 1979 as new construction. Nearly half of current condominiums are categorized as conversions per assessor's records, with most of those conversions being done in older buildings, as shown in Figure 2.14 below. However, as noted later in the section on development trends, the trend toward condominium conversions has notably decreased since the 2016 Housing Production Plan.

Figure 2.14. Condominiums, Year Structure Built

Source: Arlington Assessor's Records, 2021

(Note: For condo conversions, this does not indicate when the conversion took place; it simply indicates when the structure itself was built.)



MIXED USE

Assessor's records indicate seventy-six mixed use properties, primarily along Massachusetts Avenue. Approximately fifty of these mixed use properties contain at least one residential unit.¹⁹ These tend to be older buildings, with a median construction year of 1915 and more than half built before 1920. Unsurprisingly, these properties have larger lot coverage ratios than exclusively residential properties (0.78 on average for mixed use with residential compared to an average of 0.31 for single family homes and 0.52 for two- and three-family homes).

MULTI-FAMILY

Not including Arlington Housing Authority (AHA) properties, assessor's records show 156 multifamily properties creating a total of 2,706 rental units. Fifty-nine percent of these properties are smaller-scale (fewer than ten units), with a median construction year of 1920. Thirty-four percent of Arlington's multifamily properties are more moderately sized at 10-49 units each. These structures tend to be newer than the smaller-scale multifamily properties, with a median construction year of 1960. There are eleven larger apartment complexes (50+

¹⁹ Data from the Department of Planning and Community Development, September 1, 2021.

units) together producing 1,214 housing units.²⁰ These tend to be the newest, with a median construction year of 1968 and the newest built in 2012 (Brigham Square) and 2013 (Arlington 360).

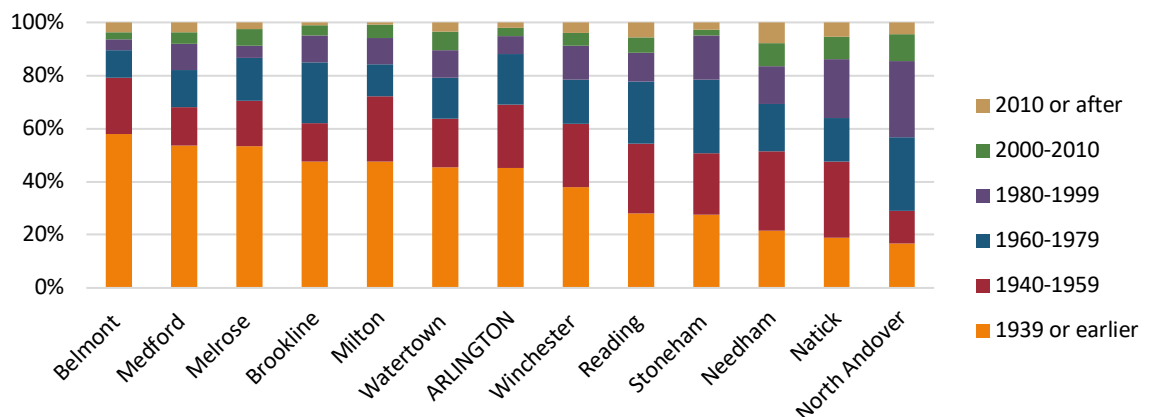
While American Community Survey (ACS) data does not provide as accurate or reliable a glimpse into a community's housing stock as its assessor's records, for the sake of comparison with other communities, it proves useful as a common data source. As noted in the introduction to this Needs Assessment, this report uses the "Town Manager 12 Communities" Arlington typically looks to for comparative analysis: Belmont, Brookline, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Natick, Needham, North Andover, Reading, Stoneham, Watertown, and Winchester. While these communities were chosen for their similarities in characteristics relating to municipal budget, there are some notable differences in their housing stock.²¹ The analysis that follows is, therefore, based on ACS data rather than assessor's records.²²

Age of Housing Stock

Eighty-eight percent of Arlington's housing units (all types) were built prior to 1980, a share only surpassed by Belmont with ninety percent of its housing units built prior to 1980. As Table 2.10 above shows, older homes tend to have higher land-to-building value ratios, potentially putting them at greater risk for demolition. Because older homes are already more likely to require repairs and costly maintenance, a buyer may decide that between the costs of upkeep, the low building value, and high land value, demolishing and building a newer home makes better financial sense.

Figure 2.15. Percent Housing Units by Year Built (All Housing Types)

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019



²⁰ This does not include AHA properties, which together include 569 rental units housed in five sites - Winslow Towers, Chestnut Manor, Cusack Terrace, Menotomy Manor, and Drake Village Complex.

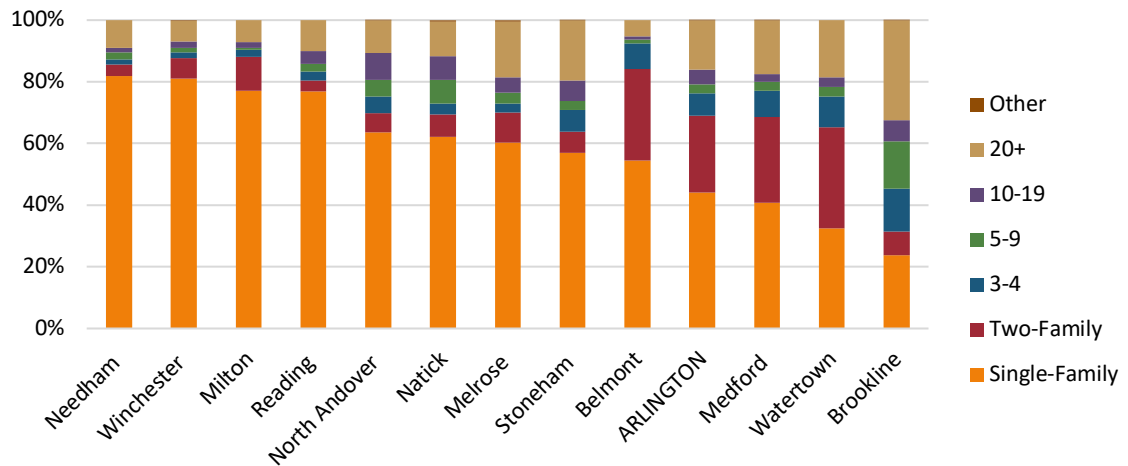
²¹ Per the Town of Arlington FY2022 Annual Budget & Financial Plan, "These communities were selected by Town, School, and Union leadership. These communities were identified based on a number of factors including: population, five-year average municipal growth factor, population per square mile, median income per capita, median income per household, single family median home value, average family tax bill, total tax levy, excess capacity as a percentage of maximum levy and residential valuation as a percentage of the total tax levy."

²² ACS data represents housing units, not structures. In other words, a building constructed in 1980 and including ten housing units would count as ten housing units built in 1980 for ACS purposes rather than one structure built in 1980.

Housing Units by Type

Single-family homes make up 44 percent of Arlington’s housing stock, a lower share than nine of the twelve comparison communities. Twenty-five percent of Arlington’s housing stock consists of two-family homes, a share only exceeded by three of the comparison communities (Belmont, Medford, and Watertown). These two-family homes are sometimes the target of conversions to condominiums, a trend identified by some resident interview participants and discussed further below.

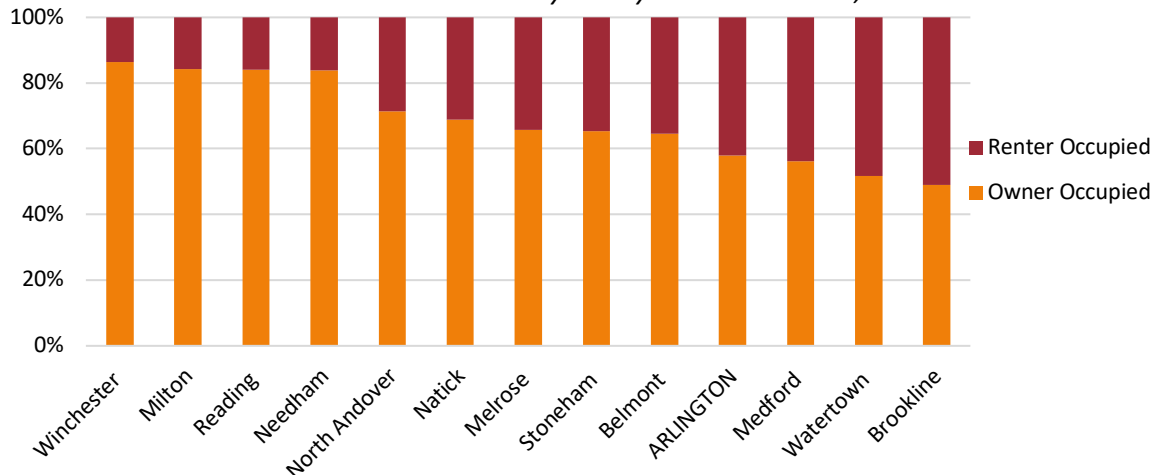
Figure 2.16. Housing Units by Housing Type
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019



Occupancy

Often, the higher a community’s share of single-family homes, the higher the share of homeowners as opposed to renters, a trend reflected in Arlington and the comparison communities as Figures 2.16 and 2.17 together demonstrate.

Figure 2.17. Tenure
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019



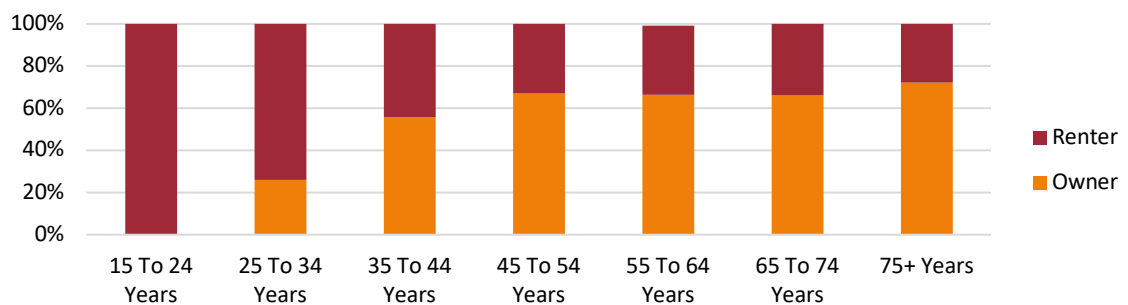
Tenure

From the 1990 Census to the 2010 Census, the percent of homeowners in Arlington increased from 57 percent to 61 percent.²³ Townwide, ACS estimates show that homeownership rates vary quite a bit across neighborhoods, however. Homeownership rates in some parts of East Arlington falls below 20 percent, but in areas within Arlington Heights, nearly every home is owner-occupied. These differences in tenure go hand-in-hand with differences in household incomes and race, suggesting the existence of housing equity barriers within the town. Still, East Arlington has also experienced one of the highest value appreciation rates in town, and this is not uncommon in areas with a housing stock that was historically more affordable.²⁴ Over time, Arlington has become a town people move up to from a less valuable house or condo in another community, responding to the same market trends that have driven up prices in Cambridge and Somerville and threatened the affordability of rental housing.

Neighborhood	Ownership Rate	% of Town's Rental Inventory
Arlington Center	58.4%	18.8%
Arlington Heights	70.2%	12.4%
Turkey Hill	73.6%	7.0%
East Arlington	42.1%	34.3%
Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019		

The **age of householder** (defined as the head of household) predictably correlates to tenure, with householders under 35 much less likely to own, with a significant jump in the 35-44 age bracket. The share of homeowners remains fairly stable up until age 75, where it modestly increases to 72 percent. Given the affordability gap between median incomes and median sale prices described in the next section, it is unsurprising that younger heads of household in Arlington are much less likely to be able to purchase a home than those with more established careers and higher incomes.

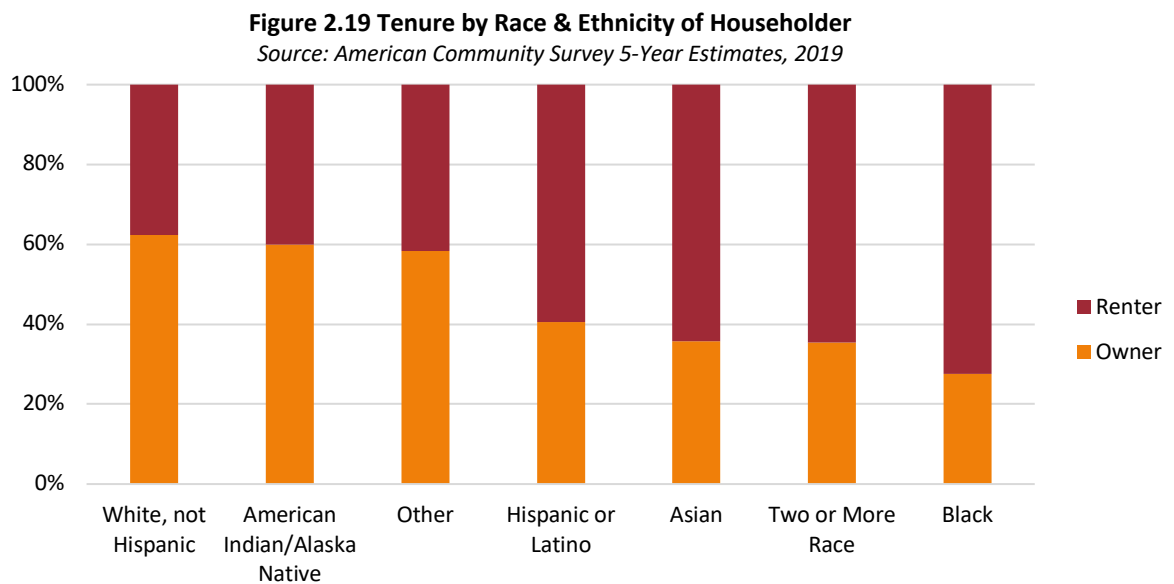
Figure 2.18. Tenure by Age of Householder
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019



²³ While current ACS 2019 figures indicate an estimated 58 percent of all units in Arlington are owner-occupied (an increase), the upcoming availability of Census 2020 household data will provide more accurate information.

²⁴ Neighborhood Scout, <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ma/arlington/real-estate>.

The **race and ethnicity of householder** also tie into tenure; Figure 2.19 highlights the significantly lower rates of homeownership among Black, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino households, as well as households of two or more races. This trend is mirrored in applications for mortgages, as pointed out in the recently completed Fair Housing Action Plan’s review of federal Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data. The analysis found that “Of the 2,590 applications in Arlington where the race and ethnicity of the primary applicant was reported, the vast majority of applicants were White (78%; 2,011 people), followed by Asian (18%; 476 people). Just 53 applicants (2%) were Latino and just 23 (1%) were Black.” Additionally, “the share of Latino and Black applicants is much lower than that of Arlington’s current population (4% and 2% respectively).”²⁵



Vacancy

Of Arlington’s approximately 20,207 housing units, an estimated 1,142 (5.7 percent) are vacant, with some significant variation by block group. For the most part, block groups with higher vacancy rates are located in East Arlington.

Local Perceptions of Arlington’s Housing Stock

The 2020 Envision Arlington Town Survey generated 4,581 responses and included questions about housing as well as resilience to climate change, improving Town elections, net zero emissions, open space and recreation, and reducing plastic waste. This survey has been conducted annually since 1992 and is in part funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

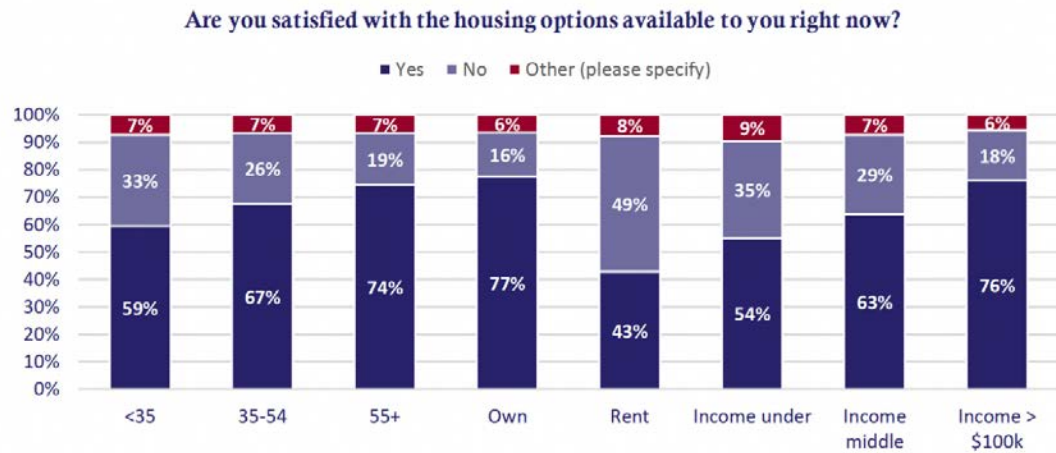
While the majority of respondents (sixty-nine percent) indicated satisfaction with current available housing options, “There was a significant correlation between satisfaction and

²⁵ Massachusetts Area Planning Council (MAPC), Town of Arlington: Fair Housing Action Plan, July 2021, p.90

higher income, older ages, and homeownership” as reflected in the chart below (taken from the report).²⁶ In other words, lower income residents, younger residents, and renters were less likely to indicate satisfaction with the housing options available to them. Also of note, the Envision Arlington Town Survey is distributed to existing residents and therefore does not capture the opinion of those who would like to live in Arlington but are unable to find adequate housing.

Figure 2.20 Satisfaction with Housing Options

Source: Envision Arlington Town Survey 2020



²⁶ Envision Arlington 2020 Town Survey: Report on Survey Responses, p.7

HOUSING MARKET

Development Trends

CONDOMINIUM CONVERSIONS

In small-group interviews conducted at the outset of this process, participants described a trend of existing two-family and three-family homes being converted to condominiums, potentially further reducing the availability of reasonably priced rental units. Ironically, however, from FY2016-FY2022 (June 2021), 284 structures (mostly two-family homes) were converted to condos, creating a total of 633 new condominium units, a decrease from the rate reported in the last Housing Production Plan.²⁷ Nevertheless, public perception is that teardown-and-rebuild projects continue.

Table 2.12. Existing Structures Converted to Condominiums		
	Converted Structures	Condos Created
FY2016	39	133
FY2017	31	62
FY2018	57	116
FY2019	33	68
FY2020	49	101
FY2021	33	66
FY2022	42	87
Source: Department of Planning & Community Development, July 12, 2021		

DEMOLITIONS & REPLACEMENT HOMES

Another concern interviewees raised was the demolition of older homes and subsequent construction of larger, more expensive homes. Some said this type of activity is detrimental to neighborhood character and overall housing affordability in Arlington due to the loss of “naturally affordable” homes. With this concern in mind, from October 2018 to March 2019 the Department of Planning and Community Development worked with the Residential Study Group (RSG), which was “tasked with studying...the demolition of structures that may be affordable and the incompatibility of new structures in established neighborhoods.” According to the DPCD “Report on Demolitions and Replacement Homes” (July 2019): “Based on the data reviewed in this report, it cannot be said that the loss of structures is resulting in a loss of affordability in Arlington” because “there are very few properties that can be considered affordable under the definition established by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.”²⁸ Also, it is important to consider the number of demolitions (an average of 13.5 single-family homes per year and even fewer two-family) in the larger context of Arlington’s approximately 20,000 housing units. Figures 2.21 and 2.22 show demolition and construction trends over the past five years.

²⁷ The 2016 Housing Production Plan reported 1,460 conversions to condominiums between 2010 and 2014.

²⁸ DPCD Report on Demolitions and Replacement Homes, July 11, 2019, p.37

Figure 2.21. Residential Demolitions per Year
Source: Department of Planning & Community Development

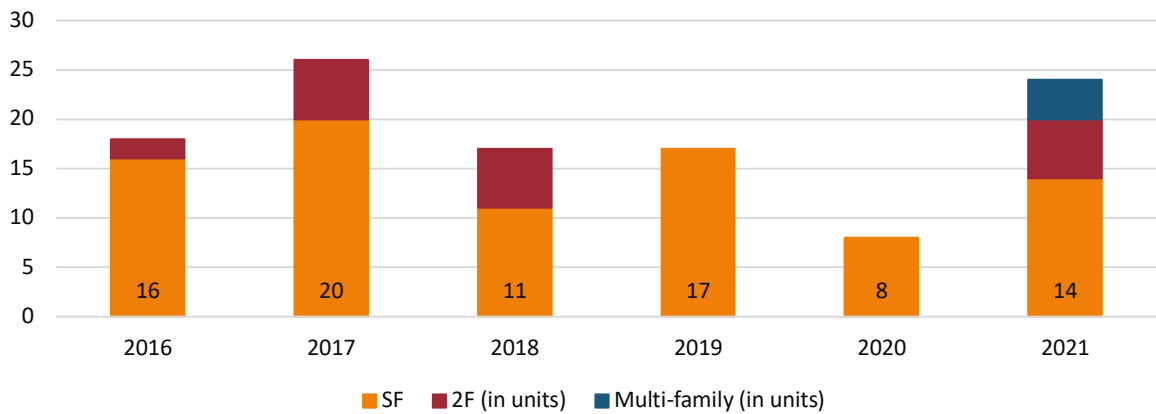
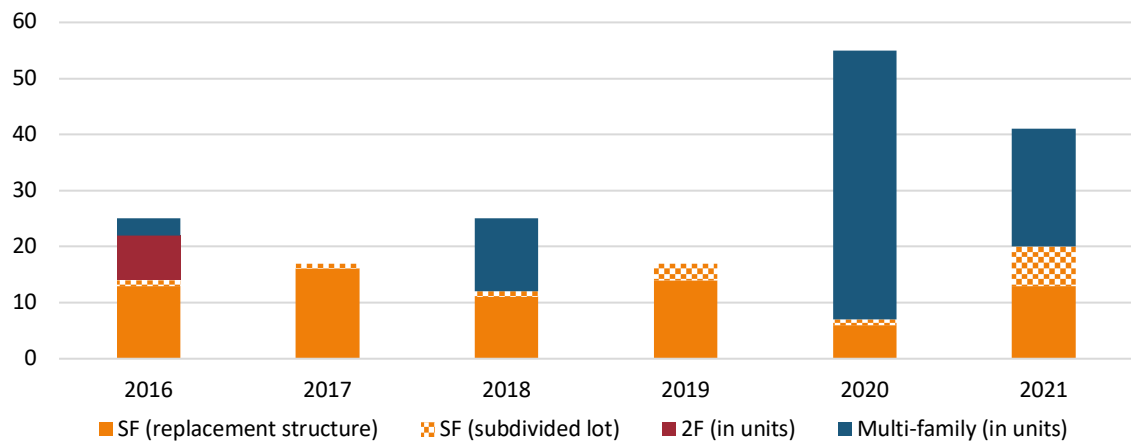


Figure 2.22. Residential Construction Per Year
Source: Department of Planning & Community Development



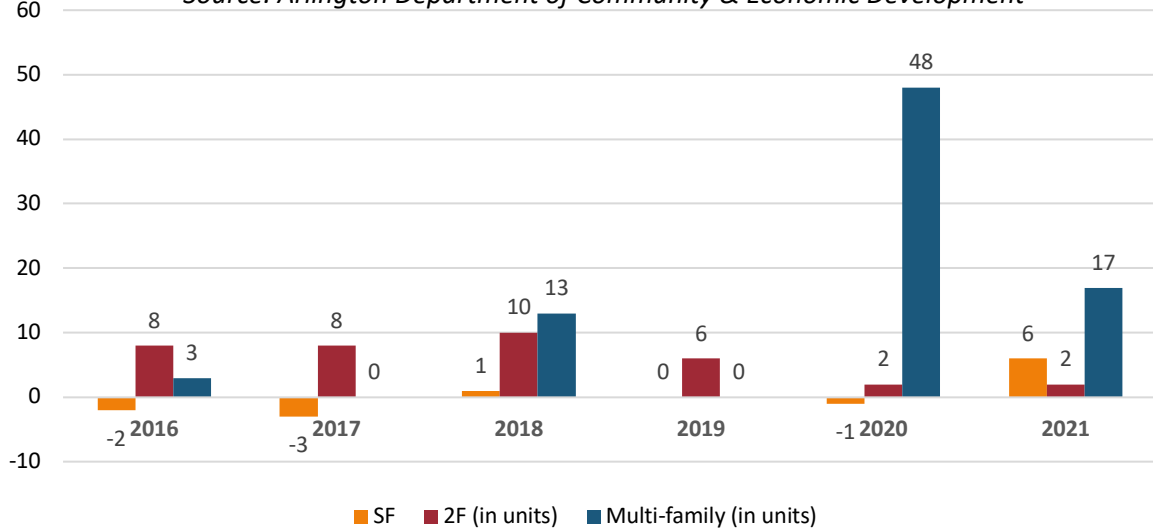
MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

While much of the conversation during the community engagement process for the Needs Assessment focused on the impact of condominium conversions and demolitions, most net-new housing units since the 2016 Housing Production Plan have come from multifamily development. From 2016-2021, 133 housing units were created through multifamily development, 52 of which are affordable.²⁹ Figure 2.23 displays the net-new housing units by type from 2016-2021 and highlights the impact of recent multifamily development on Arlington's total housing count. This trend may continue with two comprehensive permit applications under consideration at the time of this draft; these projects are described further in the Subsidized Housing Inventory section below.

²⁹ Housing Corporation of Arlington's Downing Square Project produced 48 these 52 affordable units.

Figure 2.23. Net New Housing Units by Type, 2016-2021

Source: Arlington Department of Community & Economic Development



Housing Sale Prices

The competition for a home of one's own in Arlington drives the value of land and the cost of housing. The owner-occupied vacancy rate is below one percent in Arlington, and similar conditions exist in neighboring communities. There are remarkably few opportunities for young wage earners to choose Arlington or anywhere nearby. The same is true for Arlington's comparison communities, which share the same extraordinarily tight market conditions. During the planning process for this Housing Plan, some interviewees ascribed the growth in unit sizes and high sale prices to developer or homebuilder greed, but often, the demand for a spacious residence comes from new buyers with the means to pay for the residence they want—and home sellers are keenly aware that they can ask top dollar. Sale prices in Arlington have come in, on average, about 105 percent of the seller's asking price, at roughly \$560 per square foot.^{30,31}

Homes for sale in Arlington cater to homebuyers seeking a place to live with easy access to Cambridge. Often, those homebuyers are families with children under 18, drawn to Arlington for its well-respected public schools. Table 2.13 below tracks median sale prices and sales volume statistics for Arlington since 2016, i.e., since the date of the last Housing Plan. Current real estate sales data from Banker & Tradesman show that Arlington's housing market is highly competitive, and its home sellers can capitalize on considerable equity. The median sale price for all of 2020 was \$862,500, but in the first half of 2021, the median sale price had already reached \$960,000 by late spring. None of these sales involved first-time homebuyers. The average mortgage loan for homes recently purchased in Arlington is anywhere from 65 to 80 percent of the sale price.³²

³⁰ Greater Boston Association of Realtors, Monthly Market Insight Report, June 2021.

³¹ Trulia, "Affordability of Living in Arlington," June 2021.

³² Banker & Tradesman, Real Estate Records Search, Arlington, Massachusetts, single-family sales sample for June 2020-May 2021.

Year	Period	Single-Family Median	% Change	Number of Sales	Condo Median	% Change	Number of Sales
2021	January-July	\$960,000	11.3%	186	\$709,000	8.8%	181
2020	Annual	\$862,500	6.0%	290	\$651,500	6.8%	272
2019	Annual	\$814,000	3.1%	304	\$610,000	5.0%	237
2018	Annual	\$789,500	9.7%	312	\$580,700	5.7%	248
2017	Annual	\$720,000	2.9%	325	\$549,250	15.6%	242
2016	Annual	\$700,000		341	\$475,000		280

Source: Banker & Tradesman, "Town Stats," Arlington Housing Sales.

Market Rents

Rent reports for Arlington and comparison communities place Arlington within the mid-range for rental costs. Two-family rentals have historically been common in Arlington, but as two-family properties convert to condominium ownership, the supply of small-scale rental options will decline. The multifamily apartment and condo-for-rent inventory consists almost entirely of 1- or 2-bedroom units designed for small households, yet the monthly rents clearly exceed what most single people can afford and, in many cases, they also exceed what a young employed couple could afford.

Figure 2.24. Median Market Rents by Bedroom

Source: Rentometer Reports, 2021



HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Under G.L. c. 40B, enacted in 1969, all municipalities are required to have housing that is: affordable to low- to moderate-income households; remains affordable to them even when values appreciate under robust market conditions; is regulated via a deed restriction and regulatory agreement; and is subject to meet an affirmative fair housing marketing plan. Another type of affordable housing — generally older, moderately priced dwellings without deed restrictions, and which lack the features and amenities of new, high-end homes — can help to meet housing needs, too, but only if the market allows. There are other differences, too. For example, any household — regardless of income — may purchase or rent an unrestricted affordable unit, but only a low- or moderate-income household qualifies to purchase or rent a deed-restricted unit.

Table 2.14 reports HUD’s 2021 income limits, which are used to determine whether a household is eligible to purchase or rent a deed-restricted affordable unit. Both types of affordable housing meet a variety of housing needs and both are important. The difference is that the market determines the price of unrestricted affordable units while a legally enforceable deed restriction determines the price of restricted units. Today, Arlington has very few affordable units, unrestricted or deed restricted. Furthermore, unrestricted units that may have offered a pathway to owning a home in the past have been a key target of demolition/rebuild projects and condominium conversions in Arlington’s older neighborhoods.

Table 2.14. HUD 2021 Income Limits			
Household Size	Extremely Low Income Limits ³³	Very Low (50%) Income Limits	Low (80%) Income Limits
1	\$28,200	\$47,000	\$70,750
2	\$32,200	\$53,700	\$80,850
3	\$36,250	\$60,400	\$90,950
4	\$40,250	\$67,100	\$101,050
5	\$43,500	\$72,500	\$109,150
6	\$46,700	\$77,850	\$117,250
7	\$49,950	\$83,250	\$125,350
8	\$53,150	\$88,600	\$133,400
Source: HUD FY 2021 Income Limit Area, Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH HUD Metro FMR Area.			
Note: Arlington’s average household size is 2.4 people per household.			

Table 2.15 below reports low to moderate income (LMI) households in Arlington by type. Clearly, elderly *non-family* households are most affected, with 64 percent of this household

³³ Per HUD: The FY 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act changed the definition of extremely low-income to be the greater of 30/50ths (60 percent) of the Section 8 very low-income limit or the poverty guideline as established by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), provided that this amount is not greater than the Section 8 50% very low-income limit. Consequently, the extremely low-income limits may equal the very low (50%) income limits.

type considered LMI. Conversely, large, related families are the least likely to be affected, with only 9 percent of such households considered LMI.

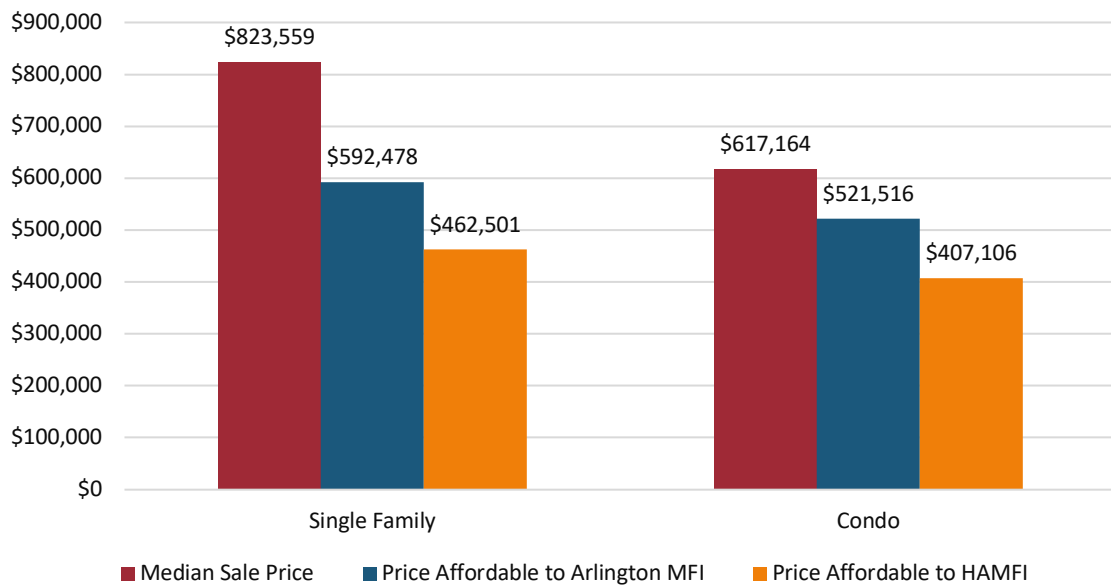
Table 2.15. Arlington LMI Households by Type				
Household Type	<30% AMI	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	TOTAL LMI HHDS
Elderly (1-2 Members)	13%	10%	12%	34%
Elderly Non-Family	31%	21%	12%	64%
Small Related (2-4 Persons)	2%	4%	5%	12%
Large Related (5+ Persons)	3%	4%	2%	9%
Other	13%	12%	12%	37%
ALL HOUSEHOLD TYPES	11%	9%	9%	29%
<i>Source: CHAS 5-Year Estimates, 2012-2017</i>				

AFFORDABILITY GAP

Based on Arlington's property tax rate and industry standards for housing affordability, mortgage terms, insurance rates, and other factors, households earning Arlington's 2019 median family income of \$145,141 can reasonably afford a single-family home of approximately \$592,500 and a condominium of approximately \$521,500. However, this is significantly below the median sale prices for both single-family homes and condominiums for the same year because housing sale prices have risen so significantly in Arlington since 2019. This becomes even more unattainable for those earning the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI), as shown in Figure 2.25 below.

**Figure 2.25. Maximum Affordable Purchase Price
Compared to Median Sale Prices, 2019**

Sources: Banker & Tradesman; HUD 2019 Median Family Income; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2019

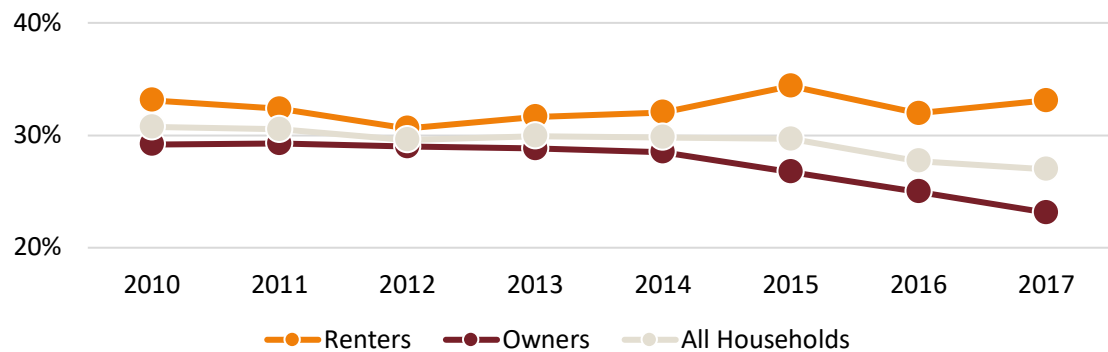


COST BURDEN

A disparity between growth in housing prices and household incomes contributes to a housing affordability problem known as **housing cost burden**. “Low” and “moderate” incomes (LMI) are based on percentages of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Area Median Family Income (HAMFI), adjusted for household size (see Table 2.14). HUD defines housing cost burden as the condition in which LMI households spend more than 30 percent of their monthly gross income on housing. When they spend more than half their income on housing, they are said to have a **severe housing cost burden**. Housing cost burden — is the key indicator of affordable housing need in cities and towns. Figure 2.26 shows that since 2010, the overall number of cost-burdened households has decreased; however, when broken down by tenure, Arlington’s renter households have not seen the same downward trend in cost burden.

Figure 2.26. Cost-Burdened Household Trends

Source: CHAS 5-Year Estimates, 2017



Other differences in cost burden and tenure exist across income levels, as shown in Figures 2.27 and 2.28 below. Among extremely low-income households (less than 30 percent HAMFI), homeowners are more likely than renters to experience cost burden or severe cost burden; this shifts for very low-income households (30-50 percent HAMFI) and renters again carry the greater burden.

Figure 2.27. Owners: Cost-Burdened and Severely Cost-Burdened

Source: CHAS 5-Year Estimates, 2017

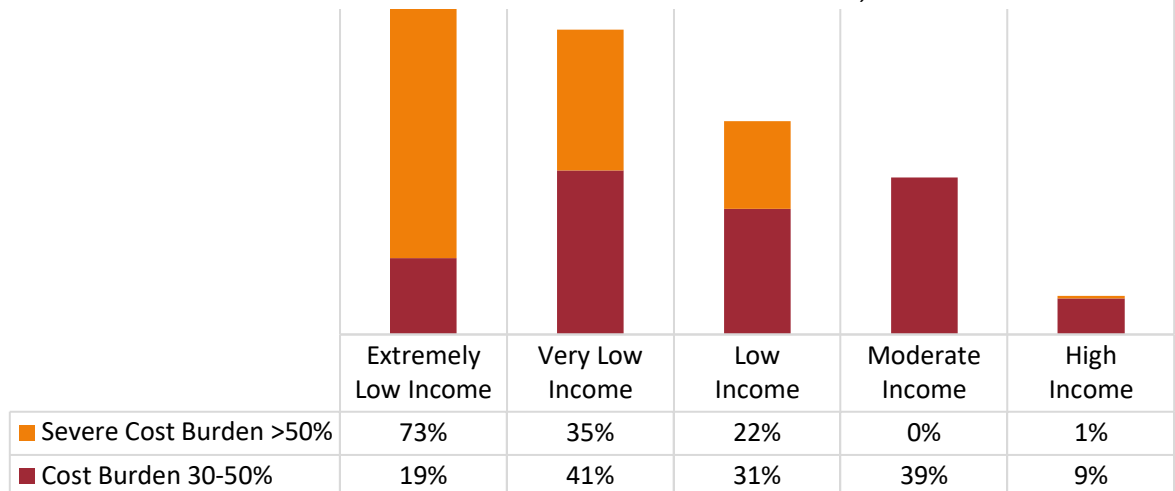
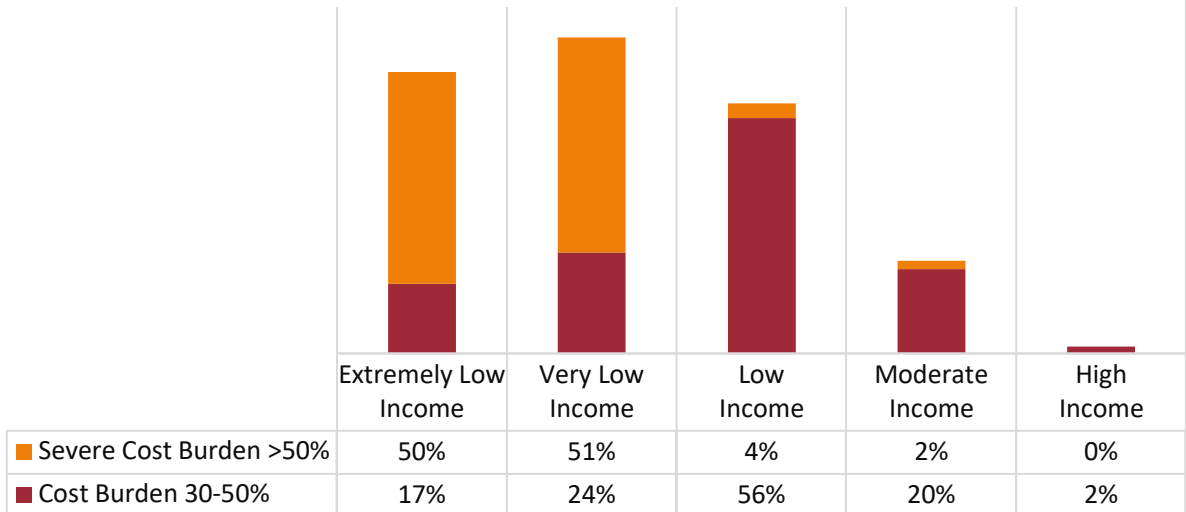


Figure 2.28. Renters: Cost-Burdened and Severely Cost-Burdened
Source: CHAS 5-Year Estimates, 2017



Different household types appear to be more likely to experience cost burden, both among LMI households and middle-to-high income households. Among LMI households, elderly non-family household types experience the highest rates of cost burden and severe cost burden; among non-LMI households, large families are most likely to pay a high portion of their income toward housing.

Table 2.16A. Housing Cost Burden for LMI Households by Type				
Household Type	Cost-Burdened LMI Households	% Of Household Type	Severely Cost-Burdened LMI Households	% Of Household Type
Elderly Family	230	9%	200	8%
Elderly Non-Family	595	20%	770	26%
Large-Family	29	3%	40	4%
Small Family	325	4%	420	5%
Other	450	11%	675	16%
Table 2.16B. Housing Affordability for Non-LMI Households by Type				
Household Type	Cost-Burdened Non-LMI Households	% Of Household Type	Severely Cost-Burdened Non-LMI Households	% of Household Type
Elderly Family	175	7%	10	0.4%
Elderly Non-Family	110	4%	10	0.3%
Large Family	105	11%	0	0.0%
Small Family	610	7%	40	0.5%
Other	240	6%	0	0.0%
Source: CHAS 5-Year Estimates, 2017				

CHAPTER 40B SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

When people refer to “Chapter 40B,” they usually mean the state law that provides for low- and moderate-income housing development by lifting local zoning restrictions. However, G.L. c. 40B—Chapter 40B proper—is actually the Commonwealth’s regional planning law and the parent legislation for agencies like the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for Greater Boston. The four short sections that make up the affordable housing provision were added in 1969, and they are called “Chapter 40B” in this Housing Plan to be consistent with affordable housing nomenclature in Massachusetts. Nevertheless, remembering the regional planning umbrella for affordable housing can help local officials and residents understand the premise of the law and reduce confusion and misinformation.

Chapter 40B’s purpose is to provide for a regionally fair distribution of affordable housing for people with low or moderate incomes. Affordable units created under Chapter 40B remain affordable over time because a deed restriction limits resale prices and rents for many years, if not in perpetuity. The law establishes a statewide goal that at least 10 percent of the housing units in every city and town will be deed restricted affordable housing. This 10 percent minimum represents each community’s “regional fair share” of low- or moderate-income housing. It is not a measure of housing needs. Other options for measuring “fair share” include a general land area minimum and an annual land disturbance standard.³⁴

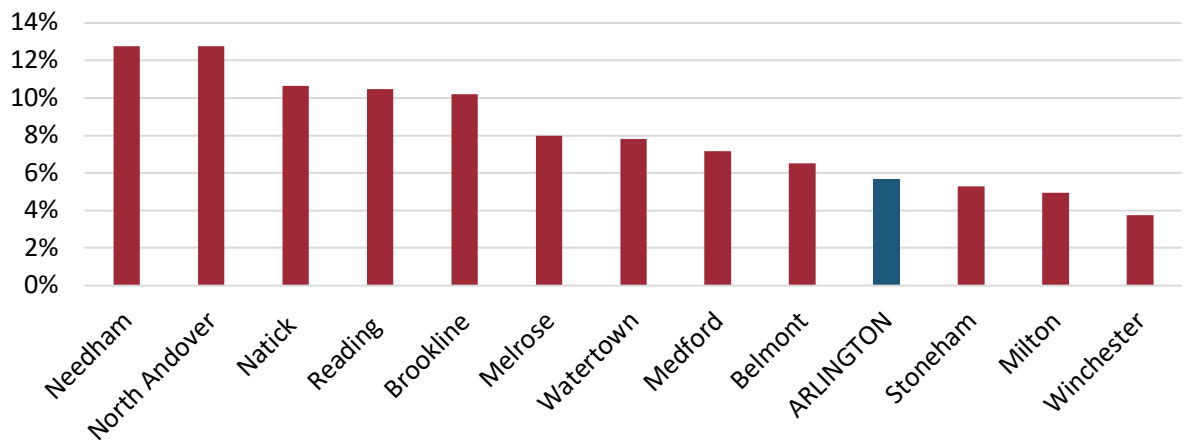
Chapter 40B authorizes the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to grant a comprehensive permit to pre-qualified developers to build affordable housing. “Pre-qualified developer” means a developer that has a “Project Eligibility” letter from a state housing agency. A comprehensive permit covers all the approvals required under local bylaws and regulations. Under Chapter 40B, the ZBA can waive local requirements and approve, conditionally approve, or deny a comprehensive permit, but in communities that do not meet one of the three statutory determinants of “consistent with local needs,” developers may appeal to the state Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). During its deliberations, the ZBA must balance the regional need for affordable housing against valid local concerns such as public health and safety, environmental resources, traffic, or design. In towns that do not meet one of the three statutory tests, Chapter 40B tips the balance in favor of housing needs. In addition, ZBAs cannot subject a comprehensive permit project to requirements that “by-right” developments do not have to meet, e.g., conventional subdivisions.

³⁴ ‘Consistent with local needs’, requirements and regulations shall be considered consistent with local needs if they are reasonable in view of the regional need for low and moderate income housing considered with the number of low income persons in the city or town affected and the need to protect the health or safety of the occupants of the proposed housing or of the residents of the city or town, to promote better site and building design in relation to the surroundings, or to preserve open spaces, and if such requirements and regulations are applied as equally as possible to both subsidized and unsubsidized housing. Requirements or regulations shall be consistent with local needs when imposed by a board of zoning appeals after comprehensive hearing in a city or town where (1) low or moderate income housing exists which is in excess of ten per cent of the housing units reported in the latest federal decennial census of the city or town or on sites comprising one and one half per cent or more of the total land area zoned for residential, commercial or industrial use or (2) the application before the board would result in the commencement of construction of such housing on sites comprising more than three tenths of one per cent of such land area or ten acres, whichever is larger, in any one calendar year; provided, however, that land area owned by the United States, the commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof, or any public authority shall be excluded from the total land area referred to above when making such determination of consistency with local needs.

The 10 percent statutory minimum is based on the total number of year-round housing units in the most recent federal census. For Arlington, the 10 percent minimum is currently 1,988 units and is based upon the 2010 Census year-round housing count for Arlington, 19,881 units. This will change when the new 2020 Census year-round housing count is released.³⁵ At 5.68 percent, Arlington currently falls short of the 10 percent minimum; to meet that standard, the Town would need an additional 859 units based on its current SHI. As of July 2021, the Zoning Board of Appeals is considering two comprehensive permit applications: 1165R Massachusetts Ave (130 rental units; 33 affordable) and Thorndike Place (124 rental units; 31 affordable).³⁶ Between the two projects, sixty-four units would be considered affordable, but all 254 rental units would be added to Arlington’s SHI, as DHCD allows all units in a rental project to count toward the SHI.

**Figure 2.29. Subsidized Housing Inventories of Arlington and Comparison Communities
(As of May 2021)**

Source: MA Department of Housing and Community Development



³⁵ As of publication of this draft, only population estimates have been published for Census 2020.

³⁶ As of completion of this draft, Thorndike Place also includes six two-family townhouses and a senior independent living facility, although these components of the project are not SHI-eligible.

POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Most of the conditions that limit or substantially constrain affordable housing development also affect any type of development in Arlington. Though Arlington has little vacant, developable land, it does have many untapped opportunities for growth through redevelopment and infill. This shift in focus to redevelopment is a process many suburbs experience as they mature and evolve. Many tools exist to manage change in these situations. For example, zoning can be used as a means to accommodate change and obtain public benefits such as affordable housing, better stormwater management, placemaking improvements (e.g., streetscape), and tax base growth. Another tool is looking at town-owned property and finding a small number of sites for affordable housing, which is a well-tested tool throughout Eastern Massachusetts. As a third example, providing public funds and tax incentives to make affordable housing *deeply* affordable can help to meet the needs of some of Arlington's most vulnerable residents. The challenge for Arlington and other towns so close to Cambridge and Boston is finding realistic options to increase and protect the supply of affordable housing while recognizing and protecting the natural assets, open spaces, and neighborhood public realm that matter to current residents.

Natural & Physical Constraints

Arlington has natural, unique, and scenic features that contribute to the Town's visual character and beauty and they should be preserved and protected. Some of these features, like wetlands, preclude housing development, while others, like floodplains, present permitting obstacles and added expense. These features are not "barriers" to be removed but "constraints" that guide new housing development where it makes sense and can best be supported by the environment and infrastructure.

WATER AND WETLAND RESOURCES

Approximately six percent (233 acres) of Arlington's total area lies within water bodies, including such regional treasures as the Mystic Lakes along the north side of town and Spy Pond to the southeast³⁷. Smaller water bodies found in Arlington include Hill's Pond, a man-made resource in Menotomy Rock Park, and part of the Arlington Reservoir, the rest of which extends into Lexington. Important rivers and streams also pass through Arlington, notably the Mystic River, which defines part of the Town's northern boundary with Medford, and the Alewife Brook, which separates Arlington from Somerville to the east.

Wetlands are sensitive, ecologically valuable resources. Throughout Eastern Massachusetts, some of the areas that supported wetlands long ago were filled and developed to meet regional demand for roads, businesses, and homes. Today, wetlands are protected and regulated under federal, state, and local law. They have a fairly limited, though important presence in Arlington. Mapping by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) indicates that about 7.5 percent of Arlington is classified as some type of wetland resource area, but that analysis is based on aerial photos and not on in-the-field

³⁷ MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information, Commonwealth of Massachusetts EOTSS), Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Wetlands Data, Updated December 2017.

surveys.³⁸ The actual percentage of wetlands in Arlington is most likely higher, but because they are limited in total area, wetlands are still not a significant constraint on new development or redevelopment. Arlington's Wetlands Protection Bylaw and its supporting Regulations for Wetlands Protection do not directly control land *use*, but do affect where construction can occur, how construction activities can be carried out, and what types of mitigation may be required for construction near wetland resource areas.

Open Space

Like most suburbs next to Boston and Cambridge, Arlington does not have much permanently protected open space. This makes the community and neighborhood parks and still-undeveloped land very important to residents. According to Town GIS data, Arlington has approximately 507 acres of designated open space, 67 percent of which is classified as protected in perpetuity, such as land owned or otherwise controlled by the Arlington Conservation Commission or Arlington Land Trust.³⁹ (This excludes the Arlington-owned Great Meadows in Lexington.) Maintaining and expanding open space, including protecting more of Arlington's designated open space in perpetuity, is a critical component of maintaining and improving local quality of life. This connection between open spaces and quality of life was regularly expressed by residents throughout the planning process both for this Housing Plan and the update to Arlington's Open Space and Recreation Plan. This Housing Plan assumes that designated open space, such as parks and conservation lands, will generally not be made available for housing development.

Environmental Hazards

There are approximately 534 acres (approximately 15 percent of the Town's area) of designated flood plains mapped by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and subject to regulatory limitations under federal, state, and local laws.⁴⁰ Several areas in Arlington experience flooding problems every few years, notably around Reed's Brook, Mill Brook, and Alewife Brook. Virtually all of Arlington's eastern boundary – from the Mystic Lakes to the Mystic River, the Alewife Brook, and Spy Pond – falls within federally designated floodplains. The Arlington Reservoir and portions of the Mill Brook are also in floodplains. Development occurring in floodplains must comply with regulatory limits under zoning and more stringent construction standards under the State Building Code. Further, property owners often face higher premiums on homeowner's insurance.

A few sites in Arlington are contaminated to some degree, but environmental contamination does not necessarily present a serious constraint to housing development in Arlington. In June 2021, DEP reported ten Chapter 21E tier classified sites in Arlington and eleven Site Activity & Use Limitation (AUL) sites, each on a path toward clean-up or already brought into compliance (see Appendix X). Both Chapter 21E tier and AUL sites were contaminated with

³⁸ MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information, Commonwealth of Massachusetts EOTSS), Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Wetlands Data, Updated December 2017.

³⁹ Town of Arlington, Open Space Data, last updated XXX.

⁴⁰ MassGIS FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer, Updated July 217. In Arlington, activity and construction in flood plains is regulated in the Zoning Bylaw Section 5.7. and Title V, Article 8, of the Town Code.

oil or hazardous materials, are subject to regulatory oversight by DEP, and require some degree of remediation prior to development. These sites tend to be clustered in the area between and along Massachusetts Avenue and Mill Brook, and include a mix of industrial, commercial, and residential uses, as well as public areas such as Buzzell Field and Arlington High School. The high pre-development costs associated with remediation can complicate re-use of contaminated properties, a problem that led agencies such as MassDevelopment to provide clean-up grants to recover brownfields for reuse.

Public Infrastructure & Facilities

WATER & SEWER

Arlington is one of sixty-one communities using the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) for water and sewer services. The Town's Water and Sewer Department performs maintenance and many of the infrastructure improvements in the Town in addition to responding to emergency calls related to water, sewer, and drainage systems. Arlington purchases all its water directly from the MWRA and delivers through five MWRA master meters into the Town's distribution system. The distribution system includes approximately 130 miles of water mains ranging from six to twenty inches in diameter, with approximately 1,400 hydrants.⁴¹ Per MWRA's 2020 Consumer Confidence Report for Arlington, local water meets all federal standards for clean drinking water⁴².

The MWRA has replaced aging pipes and installed new water mains in priority locations to improve the capacity of Arlington's distribution system. In September 2021, MWRA is scheduled to begin renovating a 10-mile section of water supply main, part of which runs through the middle of Arlington along Mystic Valley Parkway, Palmer Street, and Pleasant Street. This project is designed to improve water access for approximately 250,000 customers in Arlington, Waltham, Watertown, Belmont, Lexington, Bedford, Somerville, and Medford.⁴³

ROADS & TRANSPORTATION

Targeting new housing to areas that can take advantage of transit, walking, and biking is one of the key strategies in this plan. In July 2021, the Town adopted a new 20-year transportation policy framework and improvements plan, *Connect Arlington*. The project's eight-point strategy to improve mobility for everyone in Arlington builds on recommendations in the 2015 Arlington Master Plan. Goals and recommendations have been developed to identify priority improvement projects, programs, and policies to achieve better transportation and mobility throughout Arlington. These actions are intended to decrease congestion by encouraging alternatives to driving such as walking, biking, and taking transit.

According to the most recently available information about commuting patterns, 58 percent of Arlington's labor force commutes to work in single-occupancy vehicles. This is a significant shift from 2013 when about 67 percent of residents drove alone to work. While Arlington's

⁴¹ Arlington Water & Sewer (web); Accessed July 28, 2021. <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/public-works/water-sewer>

⁴² Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, 2020 Drinking Water Test Results for Arlington. <https://www.mwra.com/annual/waterreport/2020results/metro/arlington.pdf>

⁴³ MWRA Project Updates <https://www.mwra.com/projects/construction-updates.html>

roads and intersections continue to experience significant congestion during peak commuter periods, these statistics are an encouraging indication that Arlington has been successful in making alternatives to driving more attractive and accessible.

The Arlington DPW's Highway Division maintains 102 miles of roads, 175 miles of sidewalks, 175 miles of curb, and eight parking lots in town. It provides street sweeping services weekly for main streets and twice annually for all other streets. In addition, the Highway Division maintains signs, traffic lights, and drainage systems along roads.⁴⁴

DPW is also responsible for snow removal and ice control in winter, conducted on a 24-hours per day, seven days per week schedule. The DPW aims to keep clear all main routes and feeder roads and maintain a clear driving track on either side of the centerline on secondary streets within six hours of the end of snowfall. Residential side streets are cleared within eight hours of the end of snowfall. Cleanup operations after the end of a storm may continue for up to 24 hours or longer.⁴⁵

Traffic safety is an ongoing challenge in Arlington, stemming in part from the sheer volume of vehicular traffic moving within town and between the town and non-local destinations. Most serious accidents occur along or at key intersections along Massachusetts Avenue.⁴⁶ As this corridor presents many opportunities for infill and redevelopment of housing, it is very important to implement recommendations for traffic calming and pedestrian and bicycle safety listed in *Connect Arlington*.

Arlington's roadway network has other challenges due to man-made and natural features that force a considerable amount of traffic onto Massachusetts Avenue. Open water (the Mystic Lakes and Alewife Brook) and two National Register-listed parkways (Mystic Valley and Alewife Brook) restrict access across two sides of Arlington, and Route 2, a limited access highway, controls the entire southern border. Together, these conditions effectively limit the ease with which traffic can move both east-west and north-south. They contribute to the significant traffic backups residents experience on roads such as Lake Street and Pleasant Street. Traffic problems cannot prevent development, but they can spur opposition from neighborhood residents during the permitting process for affordable housing.

Approximately 21 percent of Arlington residents commute to work via public transportation as of 2019, an increase of approximately 17 percent from 2013⁴⁷. While there is no rail service in town, buses provide access to the Red Line at Alewife Station and both the Red Line and Commuter Rail at Porter Square Station. Arlington is also served by MBTA bus routes that operate within the town and connect it with Cambridge, Somerville, and downtown Boston.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Arlington Public Works Department, 2020 Annual Town Report.

⁴⁵ Arlington Public Works Department(web); Accessed July 28, 2021.
<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/departments/public-works/highway/snow-ice-information>

⁴⁶ 2020, 2019 Annual Town Reports.

⁴⁷ U.S. Census Bureau (web); American Community Survey, 2019 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (ACS), Table S0802, generated using <http://www.data.census.gov/>, July 28, 2021.

⁴⁸ MBTA bus routes that run through Arlington include Routes 62, 67, 76, 77, 78, 80, 87, and 350

Service is most frequent along the Massachusetts Avenue and Broadway corridors, with headways of 10-20 minutes throughout much of the day. This provides dependable service within the town and for commuters heading to the Alewife and Davis T stations. Routes off these major corridors generally have 20-minute headways during peak hours, though some are less frequent. Much of Arlington is within walking distance of a bus line. Areas that are not within walking distance tend to consist largely of lower density single-family home neighborhoods. The corridors and areas where the Town has (and is planning for) housing diversity are well-positioned for transit access.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Town of Arlington operates a well-regarded school system with nine public schools: seven elementary schools (Bishop, Brackett, Dallin, Hardy, Peirce, Stratton, and Thompson), Ottoson Middle School, and Arlington High School. Arlington also belongs to the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical School District. At the time of the last Housing Plan, Arlington was experiencing enrollment growth and residents were concerned about the potential for a space shortage. The Town has responded by investing heavily in upgrading its school facilities over the past ten years. Currently, the Town is building a new high school, which will address the existing school's space needs and aging condition. These improvements, planned several years ago and approved by Town Meeting and the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), will help to address community concerns about the high school's capacity and educational environment. According to the 2015 Space Planning Report for Arlington Public Schools, enrollment was projected to peak in 2020.⁴⁹ The Town will continue to monitor trends to make sure that local schools can meet demand.

ELECTRICAL GRID

Electricity in Arlington is managed by Eversource, New England's largest energy provider, serving parts of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. During focus groups and other public engagement, residents noted that electrical outages appear to be frequent in Arlington, compared with neighboring communities, and wondered if the local electrical grid can handle much more development. In discussion with the account executive for Arlington at Eversource, the utility noted that they have an "obligation to serve" all their communities. According to Eversource records, Arlington does not have more frequent power outages than its neighbors, and the electrical grid has the capacity to take on new development in Arlington. Similar to water, sewer, and roadways, while the electrical grid will continue to be upgraded and improved, it is not currently a barrier to development⁵⁰.

Built Environment

The built environment itself presents challenges to further development in Arlington. The town's existing development pattern includes many small lots, often tightly organized around road networks from the classic "grids" of East Arlington to the more car-centric, auto-friendly

⁴⁹ HMFH Architects, Inc., "Space Planning Report for Arlington Public Schools," September, 2015. <http://www.arlington.k12.ma.us/administration/facilities/enrollment/pdfs/apsspaceplanningstudyreportsept2015.pdf>

⁵⁰ Phone and e-mail communication with Tracy McDevitt, Senior Account Executive and Liz Toner, Community Relations Specialist, Eversource.

suburban streets of Arlington Heights. Small lots can make larger multifamily and mixed-use development difficult because the sites are too small to support a financially feasible project with affordable units. However, the larger the development, the more likely neighbors are to oppose it, citing concerns about project scale and traffic and other impacts. There are no easy “greenfield” sites left for development except for property like the Mugar property, where a proposed Chapter 40B development has catalyzed both neighborhood- and community-wide opposition. There are a few remaining undeveloped parcels that may be able to accommodate smaller-scale infill development, but beyond those, open space largely consists of parks, conservation land, school yards, and golf courses.

This report assumes that existing parks and conservation lands will not be made available for housing development. The Development Opportunities section below discusses longer-term considerations for future uses of golf courses and public and private school yards, but these are not viewed as imminent opportunities. Consequently, future housing production in Arlington will be primarily limited to infill and redevelopment. Identifying potential opportunities, working with property owners and developers to facilitate housing production, and working with neighbors to alleviate their concerns where possible takes time and determination. Community-based advocates working in partnership with Town staff, boards, and commissions may help neighborhoods accept new housing development and the redevelopment of more challenging properties.

Cost Constraints

There are numerous costs that developers must monitor closely when considering whether to invest in housing projects of any scale. These costs must be weighed against a developer’s ability to finance the “up front” investment, the ability to pass those costs on to the consumer, and the amount of profit or “return on investment.” Costs are often grouped into several broader categories on a developer’s pro forma such as land cost, fees, site work, design and permitting, and construction.

Land Cost. Because land availability is so limited in Arlington, costs for vacant or underutilized land are extremely high and also highly variable depending on site specific conditions. While there are a few larger tracts of developable land, appraisals suggest areas like these can sell for approximately \$300,000 per acre, which is very expensive. Smaller undeveloped lots, depending on their location, can cost a great deal more than that figure. Regardless of where the costs fall on Arlington’s land cost spectrum, they will be much higher than communities with more abundant supply and located farther from Boston. These costs are part of the foundation of any development pro forma and create conditions for high priced housing.

Construction Cost. Construction costs have always been higher in the Boston region than in most other markets across the country, but costs generally run higher in all major metropolitan areas. As a result, the base condition for Greater Boston is that higher-than-average construction costs (e.g., materials) contribute to higher-than-average housing costs. Recently, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of materials has skyrocketed across the country. There is no way to know for sure how long this will last, particularly if there are additional

waves of the virus, but many analysts expect construction costs to remain unusually high for the next couple of years.⁵¹

Regulatory Constraints

Zoning bylaws regulate the type and location of development in a town and set the procedures for changing one use to another. Bylaws can encourage certain types of development and discourage or outright prohibit others. In Massachusetts, communities enjoy fairly broad latitude to adopt both liberal and restrictive approaches to land use regulation because the Commonwealth is a home rule state. As such, the Zoning Act, G.L. c. 40A, largely addresses zoning adoption, permitting, and appeal procedures; establishes the jurisdiction of local zoning officials; and exempts certain uses from zoning control, such as farms of a certain size, public or non-profit schools, day care centers, religious uses, and group homes. The Act also removes any dimensional barriers to access for people with disabilities. Local zoning bylaws and land use regulations can drive or limit development, and municipalities adjust these controls in response to local needs and market demand. This partially explains the wide differences in zoning policies and regulations found in cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

Communities that want to promote affordable housing usually establish permissive rules or incentives for multifamily dwellings and an approval process that is clear and efficient. Conversely, a lack of effective zoning tools can hinder development and serve as a barrier to meeting local housing needs. The current Arlington Zoning Bylaw was recodified and reorganized in 2018, but no substantive housing-related changes were made until later the same year. The current Zoning Bylaw opens the door to some housing diversity in town, including multifamily housing and affordable units through the inclusionary bylaw. At Town Meeting in spring 2021, the Town successfully adopted an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) policy in the bylaw, allowing attached or detached units of no more than 900 square feet, so long as the ADU or the primary residence is occupied by the property owner or a family member of the property owner. This could have a positive impact on housing diversity in Arlington if approved by the Attorney General. In addition, Town Meeting recently approved several changes to the Industrial District to allow artist live-work spaces.⁵²

However, the current bylaw does not encourage multifamily housing, and in a series of focus groups with various Arlington stakeholders, many participants suggested that local zoning does not allow for enough diversity of housing types. Residential buildings containing more than two units generally require a special permit to be developed. This adds time, cost, and uncertainty to the permitting process, and also makes permit approvals more vulnerable to unwarranted appeals. Further, the bylaw does not define or regulate what has been commonly referred to as “missing middle” housing – smaller multifamily buildings of between approximately 4 – 12 units. While such buildings are allowed where multifamily is allowed, the development standards for multifamily are designed more for larger developments,

⁵¹ Billy Conerly, “Why Lumber and Plywood Prices are so high – And when they will come down,” *Forbes.com*, May 22, 2021. <https://massgis.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=e8c8e92c8ec74c149e2a46700460c7f6>

⁵² Articles 35, 2021 Annual Town Meeting.

making it difficult for a smaller building to meet all the requirements for lot size, open space, setbacks, and more and still be financially viable. This issue is explored further under Specific Zoning Barriers below.

There are two examples of where Arlington's special permit granting authorities may, in their discretion, grant some benefit to developers for providing affordable housing:

- Section 5.3.6. Exceptions to Maximum Floor Area Ratio Regulations (Bonus Provisions): affordable or age restricted units may be exempted from a district's maximum floor area limits.
- Section 8.2.4, Affordable Housing Incentives, allows a 10 percent reduction in parking spaces for affordable units or 50 percent for affordable units in a single-room occupancy (SRO) building.

However, both benefits are hindered by innate limitations. Section 5.3.6 is only relevant under a set of limited circumstances with larger parcels of land. As discussed above, larger parcels of developable land are unusual in Arlington, specifically where higher densities may be allowed. Section 8.2.4 is limited to a specific type of affordable housing, rather than more broadly applicable to the full array of more affordable housing types needed in Arlington.

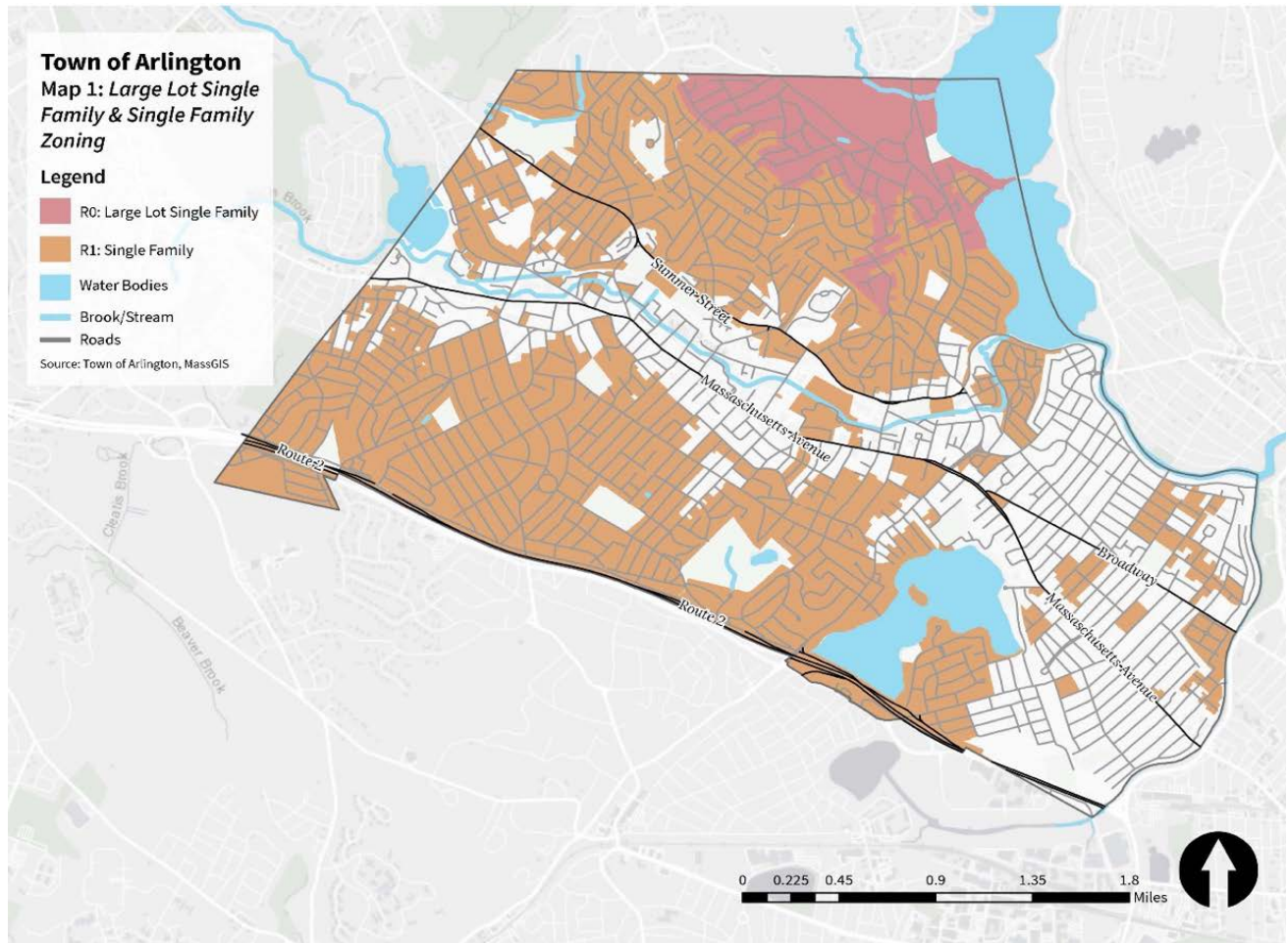
The Town currently has nineteen residential and nonresidential zoning districts, often with complicated dimensional regulations. Over 60 percent of the Town falls within its lowest-density residential districts, R0 and R1, with minimum lot sizes of 9,000 and 6,000 sq. ft., respectively. In both districts, the only economic use permitted by the Town is a detached single-family dwelling. In fact, Arlington allows a detached single-family dwelling as of right in every residential and business district, and the Planned Unit Development (PUD) district, and a duplex as of right in several districts, but no townhouse or multifamily buildings in any district except by special permit. Following a study in 2018 by MAPC, excerpts of which are noted below, the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB) attempted to update Arlington's zoning to address non-conforming parcels and facilitate multifamily housing creation through an inclusionary zoning density bonus in the R4, R5, R6, and R7 higher-density residential districts. The amendments faced intense public opposition. This led the ARB to change their "Recommendation Action" to the 2019 Annual Town Meeting to a "No Action" vote, with a commitment to return with a modified proposal at a future Town Meeting.

As noted in the Fair Housing Action Plan, regulatory barriers like those documented in Arlington have a clear exclusionary history and therefore act as an impediment to creating affordable and equitable housing opportunities: "The legacy of Arlington's past exclusionary practices is embedded in the town's urban form and in laws that remain on the books. **Addressing that legacy will require ongoing community conversation and openness to disagreement, and reforming laws on the basis of inclusion.**"⁵³ [Emphasis added.]

⁵³ Massachusetts Area Planning Council (MAPC), Town of Arlington: Fair Housing Action Plan, July 2021, p.53

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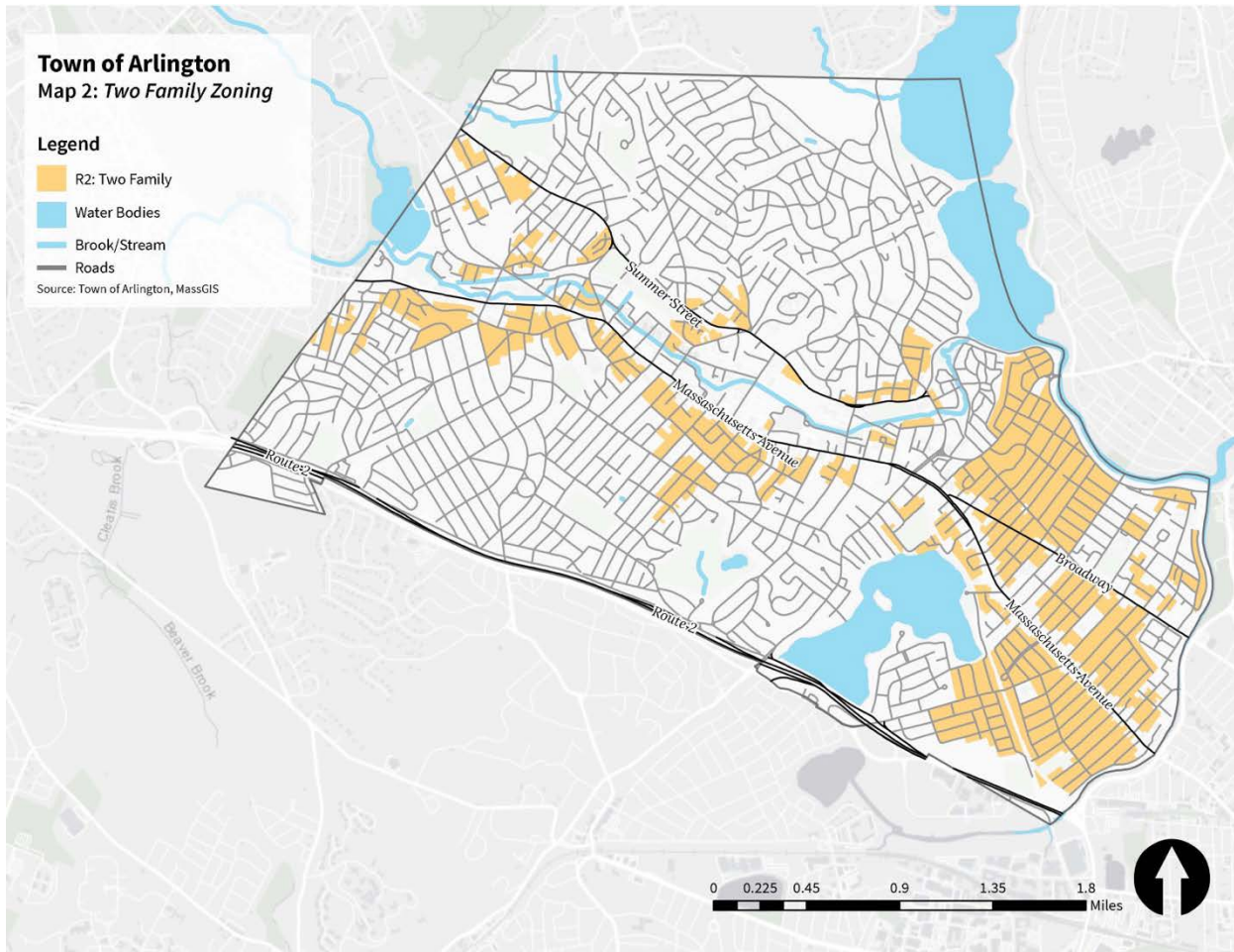
Below is a series of maps showing the land area covered by various zoning districts. As discussed above, the physical land area available for any housing other than single- and two-family dwellings is limited.



R0 & R1 – Low-Density Residential

R0 has the lowest residential density of all districts and primarily allows only single-family housing. In addition to single-family housing, R1 includes public land and buildings. Over 60 percent of the Town's total area falls within one of these two zoning districts.

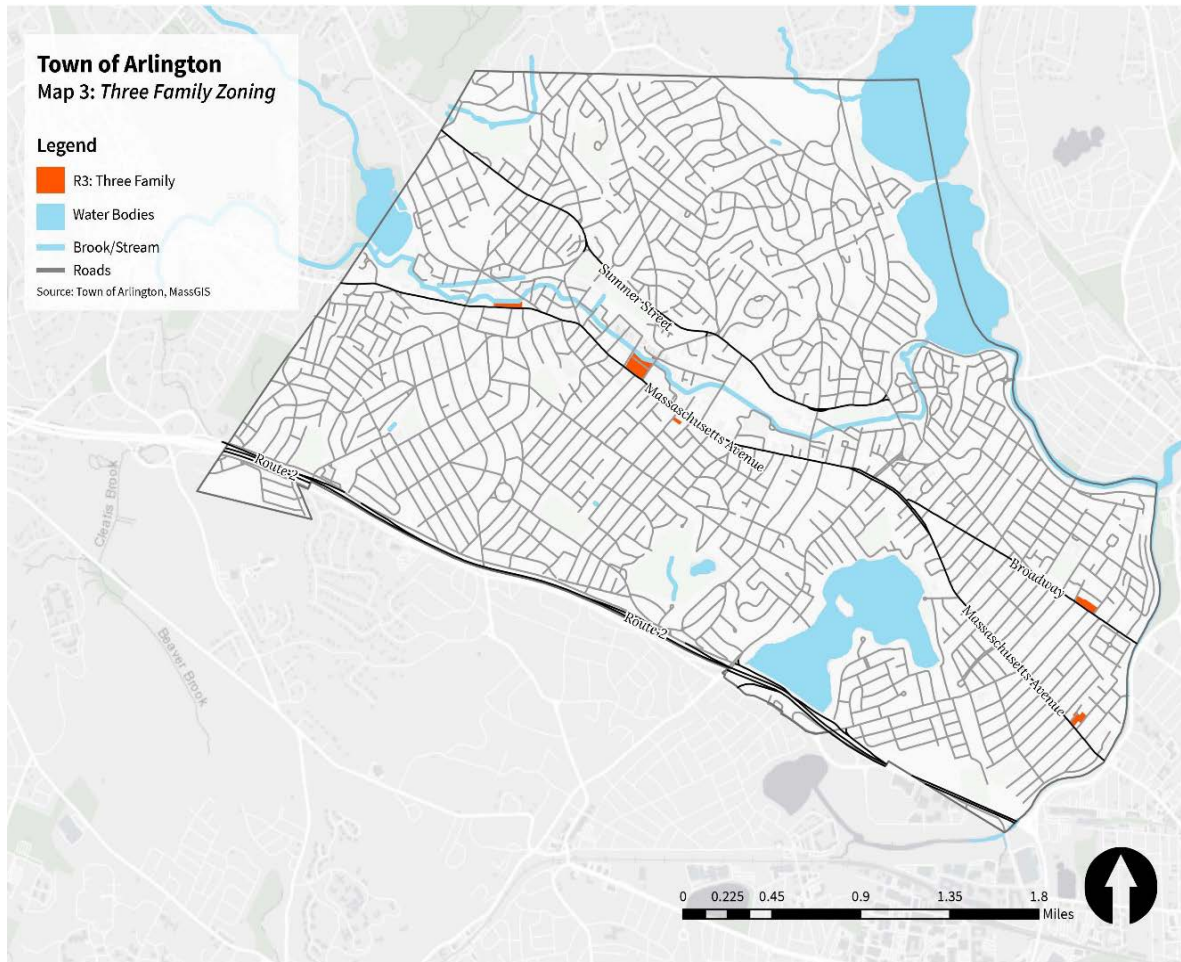
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R2 – Two-Unit Residential

Permits two-unit structures by right. Parcels are generally within walking distance of stores and transit in East Arlington, with additional pockets along the Massachusetts Avenue and Summer Street corridors. This is the second-largest district in the Town after the R1 District, covering 620 acres or 19 percent of the Town's land area. Note that while the zoning bylaw makes a distinction between Duplex Dwellings (two side-by-side attached units) and Two-Family Dwellings (two dwellings in which one unit is over the other), there is little to no distinction between the two in terms of dimensional requirements, and this plan uses the terms interchangeably.

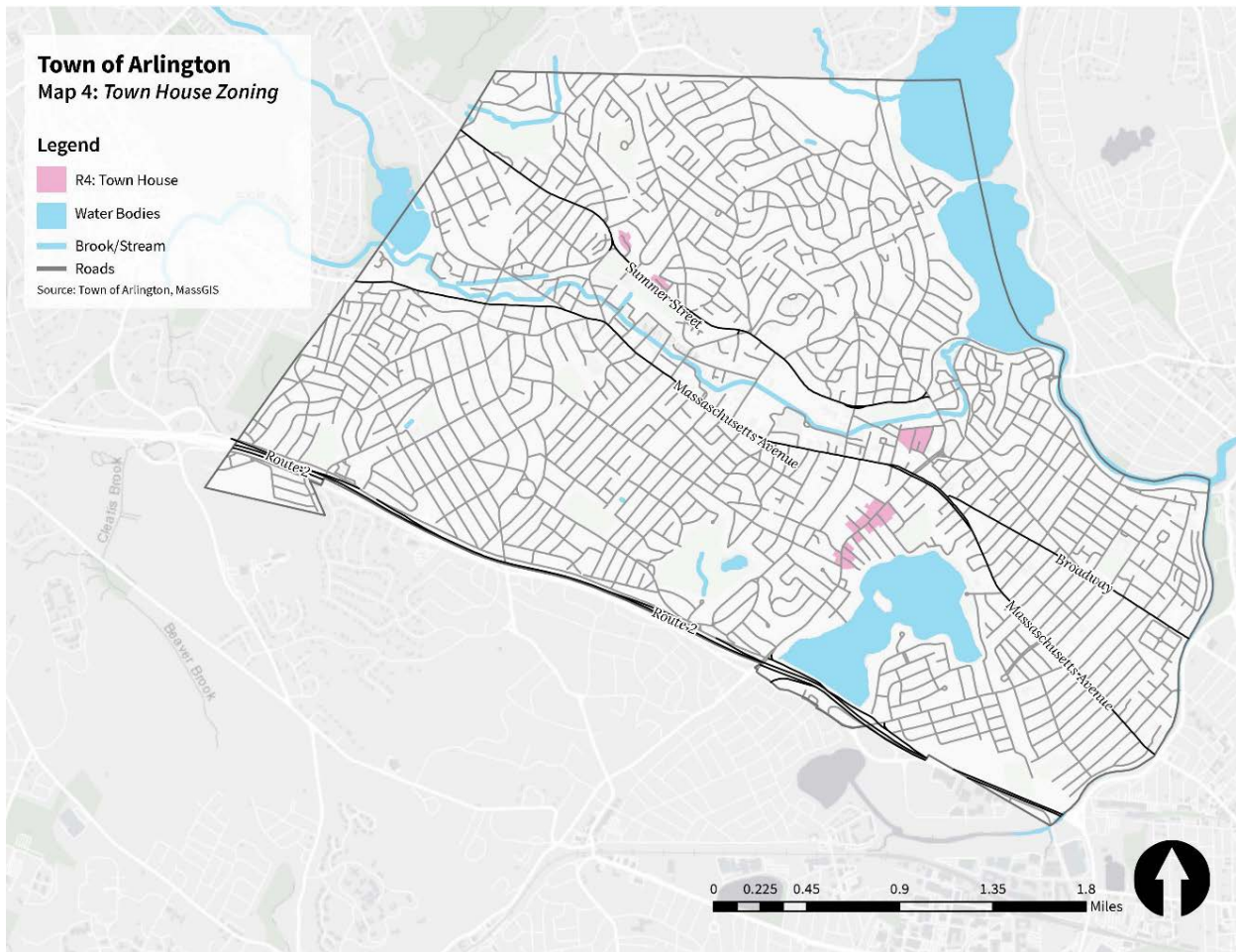
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R3 - Three-Family District

Intended for small-scale multifamily residential use. Although it is called the Three-Family District, a special permit is required to build a three-family dwelling in this zone. R3 parcels are sparsely located along the Massachusetts Avenue and Broadway corridors. This zone is by far the smallest residential zone in the Town, covering less than a half percent of the Town's land area.

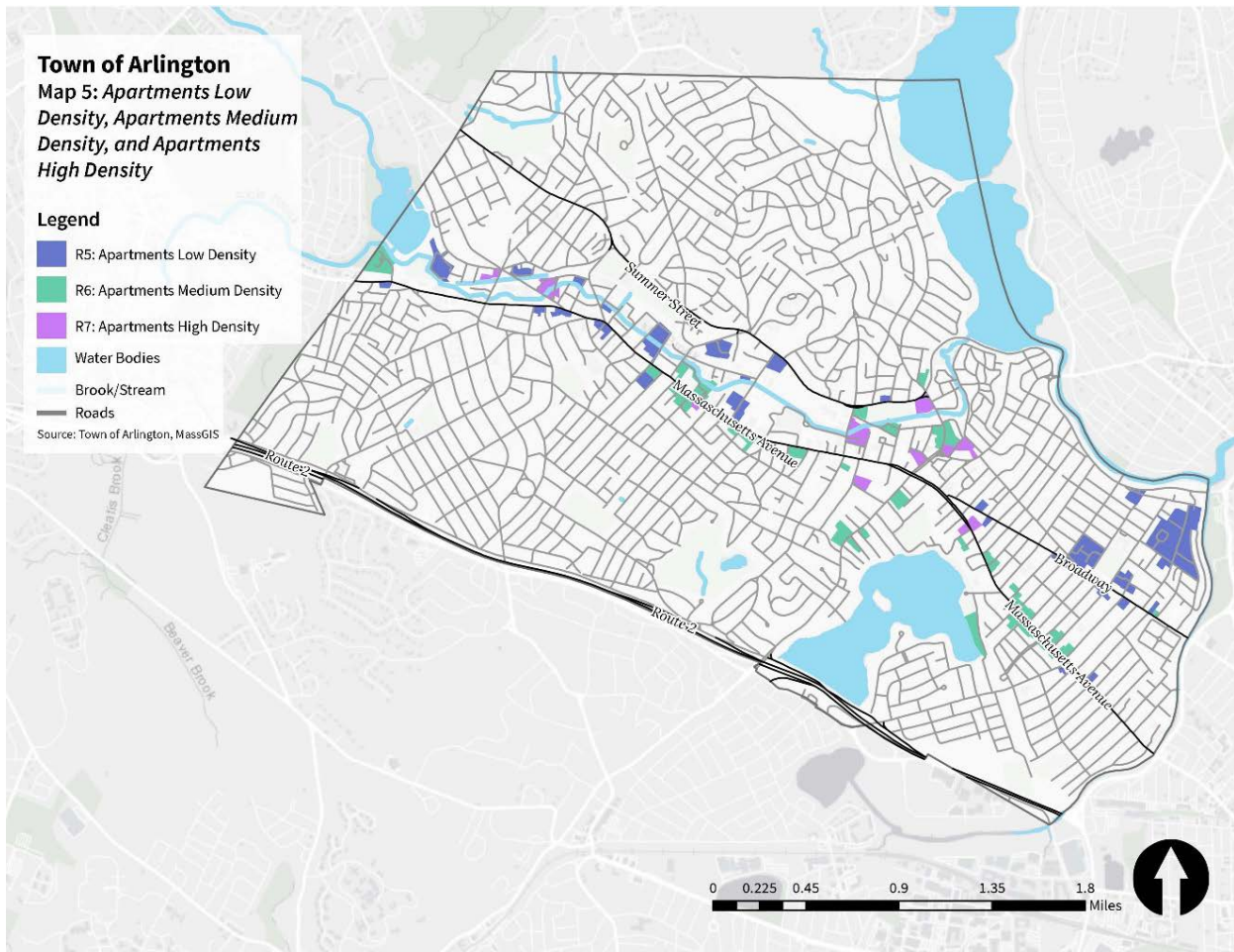
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R4 - Townhouse District

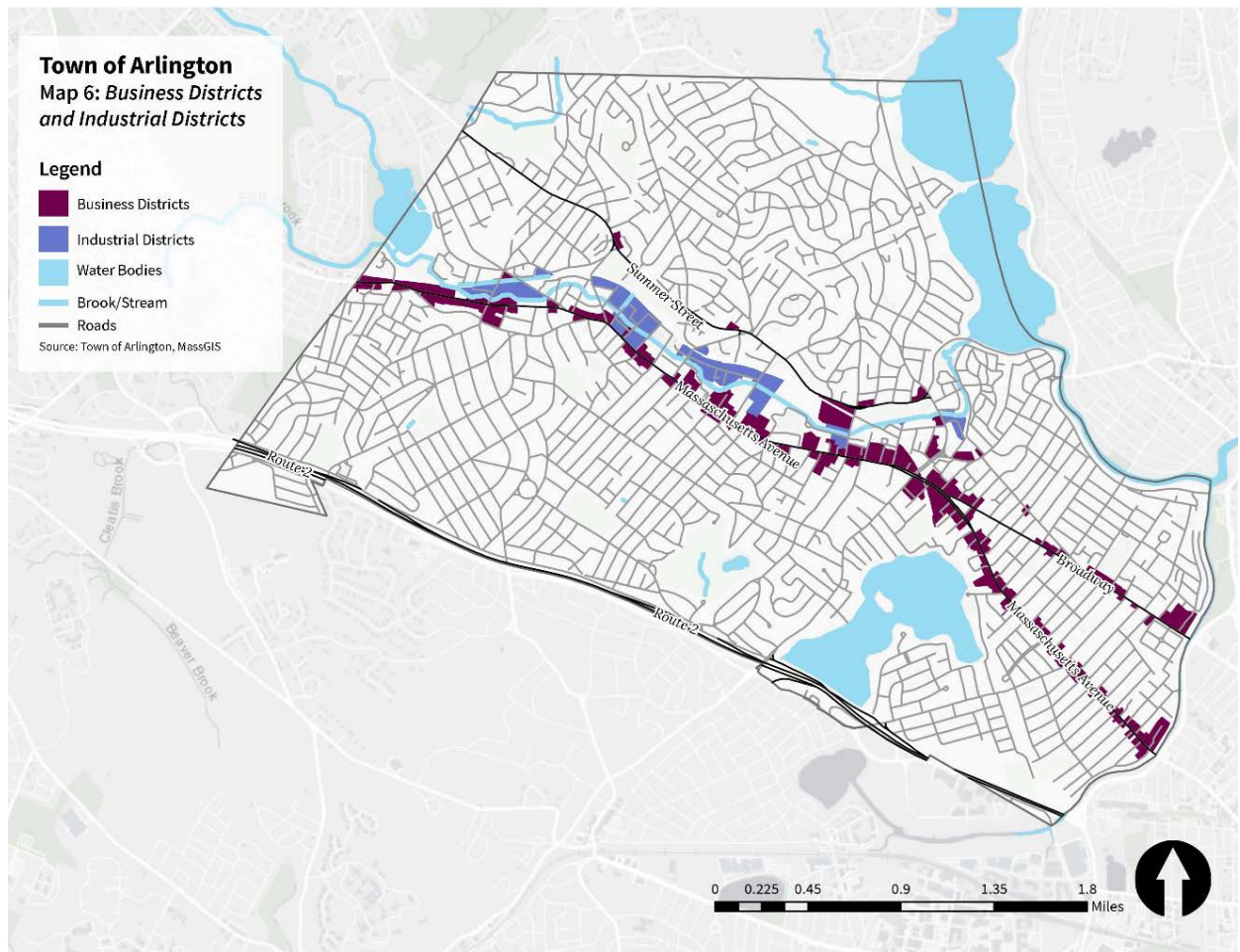
Existing building stock in this district consists predominantly of large, older dwellings. The zoning bylaw permits the conversion of these older homes into apartments or offices to encourage their preservation. However, a special permit is required for these uses, as well as for townhouse use. R4 parcels are sparsely located along the Massachusetts Avenue, Summer Street, and Broadway corridors and along Pleasant Street, covering less than one percent of the Town's land area.

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R5, R6 & R7 – Apartment Districts

These are apartment districts of low, medium, and high density, respectively. Their intended uses are predominately residential, with some office use also permitted. In all three districts, a special permit is required for structures with three units or greater, or for detached housing of more than six units (note that Arlington does not have a Subdivision Regulation). These districts are scattered along the Massachusetts Avenue, Summer Street, Pleasant Street, and Broadway corridors, and combined cover roughly four percent of the Town's land area.



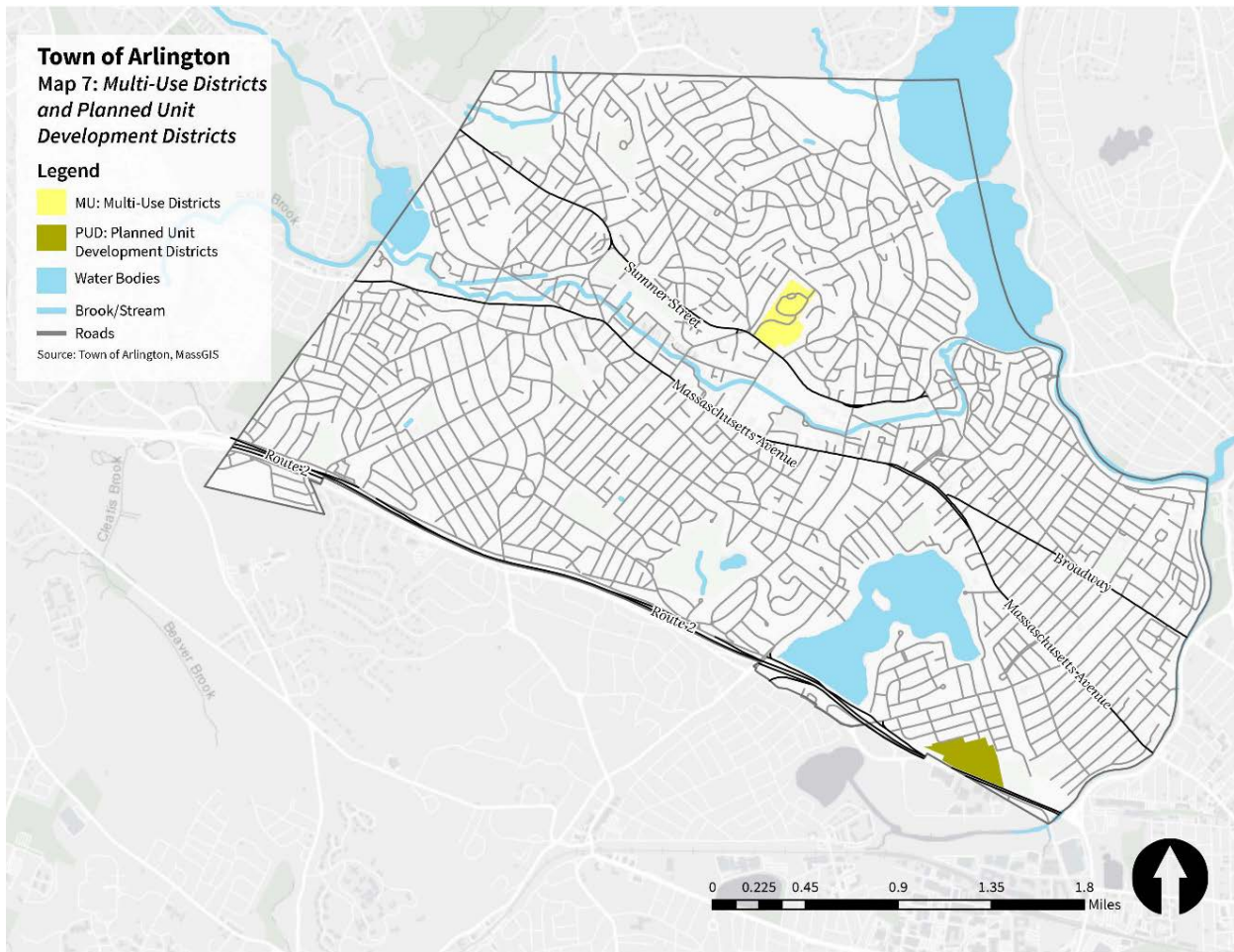
Business Districts

The Town's six business districts allow multifamily housing and mixed-use development by special permit. These districts are interspersed along the Massachusetts Avenue, Summer Street, and Broadway corridors. Each is relatively small; in total, the six districts comprise just over four percent of the Town's land area. In many of these districts, larger projects in important locations, such as along Massachusetts Avenue, Broadway, and the Minuteman Bikeway, require review by the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB).

Industrial Districts

Until recently, industrial zoning districts did not allow any residential uses. However, zoning changes in 2021 now allow for limited residential for artists to live in their "maker spaces" in light industrial areas.

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Multi-use District and Planned Unit Development District

These districts are intended to accommodate multiple uses on large areas of land. Multifamily housing is permitted by special permit and must undergo Environmental Design Review by the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB).

Specific Zoning Barriers

Numerous plans and studies have described Arlington’s regulatory barriers to affordable housing, some of which also clarify and describe the relationship between affordability and fair housing. The findings of these previous reports are still largely true, and much of the text in this section is taken directly from these documents.⁵⁴

DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Generally, the Zoning Bylaw’s dimensional and density requirements reflect the prevailing development patterns of Arlington’s lower-density districts. However, in higher-density residential districts, many requirements discourage or even preclude multifamily development. For example, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council found these regulatory barriers in an analysis of Arlington’s multifamily regulations in 2018:⁵⁵

- *Multifamily Development in the Business Districts.* While the dimensional requirements for mixed-use buildings in Business Districts are both compatible with existing development and conducive to some infill development, the same cannot be said for the dimensional requirements for multifamily dwellings because they are far more restrictive. If the Town wants to encourage more housing in these districts, mixed horizontally with business uses, the multifamily regulations need to be overhauled.
- *More than One Building per Lot.* Although the Bylaw permits more than one residential structure on the same lot, the requirements effectively assume the existence of lot lines between the buildings and all yard requirements apply, based on those imaginary lot lines. This makes it difficult to include more than one structure on all but the largest lots, and in most cases precludes thoughtful site planning for cluster development (Section 5.3.3). Cluster development groups residential properties on a site in order to preserve remaining land as open space, not to maintain conventional separation between buildings.
- *Minimum Lot Size and Frontage.* In many residential districts, the Zoning Bylaw requires townhouses to have a minimum lot frontage of 100 feet and a minimum lot area of 20,000 square feet. In the R4 Townhouse District, the minimum lot size for townhouses is even larger, at 30,000 square feet. However, this is at odds with typical townhouse dimensions, which usually range in width from 16-30 feet, and can comfortably fit on lots as small as 2,000 square feet. Likewise, apartment buildings in the R5, R6, and R7 districts require a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet. However, a small apartment building such as a four-plex or a garden-style apartment could easily meet all other open space and yard requirements on a lot half that size. Lot sizes in these districts should be reconsidered to accommodate smaller multifamily dwellings. (Section 5.4.2(A), R District Lot Regulations)

⁵⁴ Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Housing Production Plan 2016; RKG Associates, Inc., et al., Arlington Master Plan, 2015.

⁵⁵ MAPC, Multifamily Zoning Analysis, 2018.

In business districts B2 and above, mixed-use buildings on small parcels (less than 20,000 square feet) have no minimum lot size and a minimum lot frontage of 50 feet. This is generally consistent with prevailing development patterns and is conducive to today's development trends. However, townhouse and apartment uses in business districts are subject to dimensional restrictions similar to those in the higher-density residential districts discussed in the previous paragraph, and could be amended to further encourage residential development. (Section 5.5.2(A), B District Lot Regulations)

- *Minimum Lot Area Per Dwelling Unit.* Arlington uses minimum lot area per dwelling unit regulations to control the maximum number of dwelling units on a site, regardless of housing type. The Master Plan deems this an unnecessary regulation that deters mixed-use development by artificially depressing the number of units on a lot, regardless of market demand. This is a disincentive to provide smaller (and naturally more affordable) units. (Section 5.4.2(A), R District Lot Regulations)
- *Yard and Open Space.* Like the requirements for lot size, some of the front and side yard requirements in higher-density residential districts are not consistent with existing patterns. For example, many existing buildings in the higher-density districts located along Arlington's commercial corridors have no front setbacks. However, in the R4-R7 Districts, the Zoning Bylaw requires a front yard setback for apartment and townhouse uses ranging from 15-25 feet, which could be prohibitive on small lots. Likewise, the minimum requirements for landscaped and usable open space – typically 10 percent and 30 percent of total lot area, respectively – can leave little space for development when combined with off-street parking requirements. The usable open space requirement, which mandates minimum dimensions of 25 feet in both directions, is a significant constraint in terms of site layout. (Section 5.4.2(A), R District Yard and Open Space Requirements; Section 2 Open Space definition)

In business districts B2 and higher, there are no required front or side yard setbacks, as is appropriate for dense, pedestrian-oriented corridors. Mixed-use buildings in these districts are required to provide 10 percent landscaped open space and 15-20 percent usable open space. While these open space requirements could be difficult to meet given the constraints discussed below, they are far more manageable than those for residential uses. Apartment uses in business districts are subject to dimensional restrictions similar to those discussed above. They could be, but have not been, amended to encourage housing. (Section 5.5.2(A), B District Yard and Open Space Requirements)

For both multifamily residential and mixed-use buildings, the ability to satisfy at least a portion of the private open space requirements with a rooftop terrace can be an important factor in project feasibility. Arlington's Zoning Bylaw allows rooftop terraces to satisfy up to half of a project's open space requirements with a special permit, but only if the terrace is not more than 10 feet above the level of the lowest residential story. The Zoning Bylaw requires open space be at least 25 feet in any direction, precluding rooftop terraces as open space on most building setbacks. Taken together, these two requirements effectively preclude rooftop terraces from buildings that exceed one or two stories. (Section 5.3.18)

- *Building Height and Floor Area Ratio (FAR).* In most residential districts, the maximum allowable building height for an apartment building or townhouse is 35 or 40 feet depending on the district. This is overly restrictive for multifamily buildings and conflicts with the Town's goal of enabling more diverse housing types. Given that the high-density residential districts lie almost exclusively along major thoroughfares, greater heights could be accommodated in contextually appropriate ways. (Section 5.4.2(A), R District Building Height and Floor Area Ratio Regulations)

In conjunction with building heights, the maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is unduly restrictive toward multifamily housing even in multifamily districts. The maximum FAR of 0.7 for townhouses in the R4 District and 0.8 for apartment buildings on smaller lots in the R5 and R6 Districts makes no sense if the goal is to facilitate compact development and affordable housing. For example, given a lot on which over half the site is devoted to open space and parking, the FAR could still limit the building height to two stories. (Section 5.4.2(A), R District Building Height and Floor Area Ratio Regulations)

Allowable heights for mixed-use buildings in business districts range from 40-60 feet, and FARs for mixed-use buildings range from 1.0-1.5. These standards generally make sense along an active commercial corridor. Height limits and FARs for apartment buildings in business districts are generally lower, however, further attesting to the regulatory barriers to multifamily development that exist in Arlington. (Section 5.5.2(A), B District Building Height and Floor Area Ratio Regulations)

In addition to limiting overall building height, the Bylaw requires a building setback of 7.5 feet at the fourth story for buildings greater than three stories. While this is appropriate for smaller streets, it could be an unnecessary impediment to development on larger streets whose widths can comfortably accommodate greater building heights. The Town should consider raising the setback to the fifth story, rather than the fourth story, or eliminating it entirely for parcels along dense streets with large rights-of-way. Likewise, the residential height buffer, which requires lower height limits for land within a certain distance of low-density residential areas, should be reconsidered given that the apartment and business districts are scattered along the Town's main corridors and that consequently most parcels in these districts abut a lower-density residential use. (Sections 5.3.17, 5.3.19)

OTHER ZONING REQUIREMENTS

Parking: Off-street parking requirements are relevant to multifamily development because the cost of parking is often the greatest hindrance to the economic feasibility of multifamily development. Arlington's off-street parking requirements contain some progressive elements, including a 25 percent reduction of parking requirements in higher-density residential and business districts if Transportation Demand Management practices are incorporated, and additional reductions if a certain percentage of housing units are affordable. However, some of the base requirements are still at odds with the goal of facilitating multifamily housing. Specifically, the number of off-street parking spaces required for one-, two-, and three-family detached dwellings (one space per unit) is *less* than that required for multifamily apartments

(one space per unit for efficiencies, 1.15 spaces per one-bedroom unit, and 1.5 spaces per two-bedroom unit). Even with the parking reduction, two-bedroom apartment units have a higher parking requirement than detached houses. Given the extent to which parking requirements can add to the cost of multifamily housing, the Town should consider adjusting the base apartment unit parking ratios to reflect actual need based on location and transit access, at the very least aligning it with the detached housing requirements. (Sections 6.1.4, 6.1.5)

Special Permits: Although special permits can be a tool to control the scale and design of development, they are most appropriate for large projects or those with complex conditions. If required for smaller projects that otherwise comply with other district dimensional requirements, they can unnecessarily discourage development by increasing approval time and adding uncertainty and risk. Indeed, the 2015 Master Plan suggests that reducing the number of uses for which special permits are required would better equip the Town to accomplish many of the Master Plan's goals.

Criteria for the granting of a special permit in Arlington are relatively standard compared with similar communities in Massachusetts, but the Town has more than the usual number of special permit uses. The zoning bylaw requires a special permit for every multifamily use greater than two units regardless of the district, even in districts that are intended to accommodate multifamily use. Given that the Town has a goal of facilitating a greater range of housing types, it should consider allowing some multifamily by right where it would align with the district's intent and where the structures would meet dimensional standards. This could include allowing three-family structures by right in the R3 Three-Family District, allowing townhouses by right in the R4 Townhouse District, allowing some apartment buildings by right in the higher-density apartment districts, or allowing certain mixed-use by right in some of the business districts. The Town could also consider an expedited review process for certain uses. (Sections 3.3, 5.4.3)

Arlington Environmental Design Review (EDR): Certain types of residential development—such as Planned Unit Development (PUD), buildings containing six or more dwelling units, and multi-use projects—or in certain areas of town—such as sites abutting Massachusetts Avenue or Broadway, among others—must undergo Environmental Design Review by the ARB. The ARB can deny a special permit if it deems the project to have “substantial adverse impact upon the character of the neighborhood in which the use is proposed, or of the town and upon traffic, utilities and public or private investments therein.” This is another hurdle housing developers face in Arlington, increasing project timeline, cost, and risk. The ARB threshold is relatively low and may discourage some of the types of development that the Town wishes to facilitate. (Section 3.4)

Socio-Political Constraints

The barriers identified in the 2015 Master Plan, the 2016 Housing Production Plan, and other reports remain as true today as they were five or six years ago. However, most of the recent zoning reform efforts have not been successful at Town Meeting, and most of the recommendations from these plans remain to be done. This situation illustrates that, even with

high-quality analyses and recommendations, it can be very difficult to build the community consensus needed to do something about them.

The issue of housing remains contentious in Arlington. Public input gathered during this Housing Plan community engagement process indicated public acknowledgement that the cost of housing has become a barrier for the average household, or the prospective buyer, and that more affordable housing is needed. However, some residents who participated in the community engagement process are fearful of new development, added “density,” and changing the character of Arlington. Ultimately, many would prefer to keep regulatory barriers in place, broken as they are, rather than risk the unknown. Many others are pro-housing in theory, but object to specific proposals. Even when housing development can clear all the necessary regulatory hurdles, it can be very difficult to clear the hurdles of public opinion and opposition. This situation is not unique to Arlington and is playing out in communities across the country representing perhaps the greatest barrier of all to meeting local housing needs.

Making progress on these efforts will require a cultural shift from the ground up as well as strong political leadership willing to stand firm in its commitment to acting on the continued implementation of well-crafted plans. Unfortunately, the challenge of providing affordable housing and fair housing in communities like Arlington will likely grow stronger as the jobs to housing imbalance continues to widen in greater Boston, putting more upward pressure on the housing market in Arlington and across the region.

The tragedy of truth-challenged planning officials

To the Editor,

Kudos to the *Advocate* for their excellent front-page article (July 29) on Planning Department's Community Conversation Series: "Who Can Live Here, Who decides & Why." This "Conversation" should have been based on *Arlington Master Plan's* recommendation that the housing which Arlington needs is affordable housing and senior housing, not dense housing desired by the Manager and Planning Director (PD) who are officials of the regional MAPC. www.arfrr.org Although familiar statistics were presented and Tufts University's Bob Terrell discussed national and Boston area housing, presenters showed no awareness of Arlington's development history or of *Arlington Master Plan's* recommendations.

None of the presentation's Town officials or consultants involved are Arlington residents and it is possible that their misstatements (quoted accurately in *Advocate's* article) result partly from ignorance. These statements include:

1. **"Barriers that create inequality were intentionally put in place... We see that in restrictive covenants, red lining, Jim Crow laws, exclusionary zoning and overt discrimination."**
2. **"We have a historic legacy of land use planning and zoning that has been used as a barrier to prevent people from coming into our community" (this is the PD's statement –although Arlington is not her community).**

Regarding #1 – restrictive covenants were banned by the Supreme Court early last century. Any honorable attorney would insist on removal from a deed of any errant such covenants-they are simply

illegal; any such covenants in Arlington were likely of Irish, Italians, or Jews - black families were not involved-they were not yet here; **red lining** did not occur in Arlington; **Jim Crow laws** were in Southern states, not Massachusetts; Arlington had **no exclusionary zoning** and in fact enacted an exemplary **Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw** early; **overt discrimination** may have been promulgated by unethical realtors and had nothing to do with general Town attitudes which were welcoming regarding racial issues—one of the first METCO communities, early Arlington Civil Rights Committee, evolving to Arlington Human Rights Commission (of which I was a charter member).

Regarding #2 - this is simply nonsense. The Supreme Court approved zoning in 1922. Arlington early adopted benefits of zoning to prevent exploitation. There is no evidence whatsoever of its use as a “barrier” in Arlington.

Playing the race card to provide density in the second densest town in Massachusetts is unworthy of anyone who purports to speak for our Town.

Patricia Worden, Ph.D.
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