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Subject: Comments on the Barrett Housing Plan

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TO: Arlington Redevelopment Board

The draft Housing Production Plan prepared by Barrett Consulting Group LLC does not accurately present the extent of single family housing in Arlington. It states that:

*Over 60% of Arlington can only be used for single family housing.
44% of our housing is in single family houses.*

The first statement is highly misleading. The second is simply inaccurate.

Our R1 zones are heavily used for many purposes other than single family homes. As Board members are aware, all of our schools are in R1 districts.

Most playgrounds, many athletic fields, and the skating rink are in R1.

Town Hall, two fire stations, the Robbins Library, and many other municipal buildings are in R1.

Our churches and cemeteries are zoned R1.

R1 districts are also being utilized for a wide diversity of housing types. There are more than 600 multifamily housing units ranging from two families and duplexes, to several dozen apartment buildings in R1.

By actual count from the Assessor's database, there are 8001 single family homes in Arlington out of 20,461 total households. Single family homes are, in fact, just 39% of our housing stock, while 61% of our housing is some form of multi-family. The draft Plan acknowledges that Arlington is among the lowest in percentage of single family homes among comparable communities. The corrected value of 39% puts us even closer to the bottom.

Also from the Assessor's database, it can be determined that single family lots in R0-1 account for 1240 acres, which is just 38% of total Arlington land area.

A final important and little known fact is that Arlington currently has 645 single family homes in R2 districts which can already be redeveloped as two family or duplexes by right. This is highly relevant to the Plan's proposal to rezone R0-1 to allow two family homes. We do not have to speculate as to the possible outcome. We have dozens of recent examples that make clear how the free market will respond.

As these single family homes in R2 districts come on the market, many are quickly snapped up by developers for teardowns. Some do not even make it to the public housing market. In nearly every teardown case, the property is redeveloped as luxury duplex condominiums in which each of the two units cost more than the original home. Several of the most recent examples are topping \$1M per condo unit.

In no instance has the developer taken advantage of the lower cost of land per unit to build anything close to affordable housing.

The report's author has been quite candid that this part of the Plan is NOT about affordability, it is about providing more choice to upper income families who can afford to spend \$1M or more on a home, households making more than 200% of AMI. This goes far beyond the scope of what the state DHCD requires for Housing Plans. The DHCD directions are that these housing plans should address affordable housing in the range of 30% AMI to **no more than 120% AMI**.

A weak argument has been suggested about 'trickle down affordability'. The only 'trickle down' impact is upon the one third of Arlington households that have an income of between \$100K and \$200K. This includes many of our first responders and two-income teacher households. For this Middle Third, smaller, older homes that range from \$600k - \$800K are attainable. But this Housing Plan would steadily erode that existing moderately affordable housing base by encouraging teardown and replacement with more expensive duplex condos.

The middle third of Arlington is slowly being squeezed out, by eliminating the home ownership that is within their means.

I hope that this Board will make the appropriate revisions to this draft plan prior to approving it.

These comments are fact-intensive, and I would be glad to answer any questions about the sources and provide the supporting data, including listings of all 8001 single family homes or the sales data of recent teardown redevelopments.

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