

From: Mitchell Cook

Sent: Tuesday, September 5, 2023 1:08 PM

To: Eugene Benson; Kin Lau; Stephen Revilak; Melisa Tintocalis; Rachel Zsemler; arfrinfo@gmail.com; Claire Ricker; Jim Feeney; MBTA Communities; Ashley Maher; Eric Helmuth; Stephen DeCoursey; Len Diggins; John Hurd; Diane Mahon

Subject: With Regard to the MBTA Communities Act

Sorry if this email cc's more people than necessary, or board members who are not relevant to the discussion. I found most of these emails through a flier sent to me in the mail. I am writing to provide a perspective and written comment on the subject of the MBTA Communities Act in the hope that the opinion of a young local be heard at these meetings, since they are typically dominated by an older generation that is well ingrained in local politics, and does not necessarily represent the opinion of the whole community.

I am writing because I fully support the plan under review by the ARB that allocates housing for "3.5 times" the required housing necessary by the MBTA Act. There is a large and vocal group of protestors who are taking great efforts to strike this plan down, and I would like to provide a voice of support for it.

Put simply, the housing market in Arlington (and Massachusetts in general) is out of control. The average price for a 2 bedroom condo in Arlington (which consists of half of a house shared with another condo), is approximately \$1m. As a young engineer who makes \$150k/yr, who is currently renting in the area, I dream of maybe one day owning a home in Arlington, but currently the market does not support this. This perspective is from someone who is very fortunate in my career - I make approximately double the median household income in Boston. While making double the median Boston salary, I cannot afford a home in Arlington.

The way that we fix this is by building more homes. This is a process that takes many years, but by increasing the supply of houses, we work against the unsustainable market to help drive prices down. I could write for much longer on this topic, but I hope to be relatively brief in stating my full support for building as much housing as is possible in the Arlington area.

I will now refute several of the common arguments against building housing in Arlington, from the perspective of a young person and prospective home owner.

1. "Is the law going to make Arlington more affordable? 'No one knows, but it is unlikely'".

This claim is conjecture and diminutive of the goals of building more housing. Detractors of the MBTA Act claim that all housing that will be built will be purchased by condo developers and that this will not help the local housing community. This is a strawman argument. Will houses continue to be purchased by real estate developers and flipped for expensive prices? Yes. Will building more houses continue to increase the available supply, so that less predatory practices happen and more average people can buy houses? Eventually. Blocking housing from being built does nothing but perpetuate the current unsustainable market. Plain and simple, we need to build more housing to increase the available supply. Blocking housing is nothing but counter-intuitive.

2. "Where will all the cars park?"

This is another strawman argument. The MBTA housing act is explicitly targeted towards building affordable housing near the MBTA. Many residents of these communities do not require cars. Many

people who live in the Arlington area already do not have cars. This is a distraction from the main point of housing. Housing is the primary concern - houses do not need to be built with a guarantee of a parking space. Many high-density housing complexes in virtually any major city have no guarantee of parking. The discussion should be about housing, not vehicle infrastructure.

3. "Won't this negatively impact current homeowners?"

This is difficult to project, but current homeowners are often frequently victims of the current housing market. Home values are inflated, which may do things like inflate tax rates on said homes. If we build more homes to drive down housing prices, tax rates should decrease as well.

As a closing statement, I would again like to state my full support for building as much housing in Arlington as possible. As a young person, it is incredibly demoralizing to have a good career and money to spend, yet not have enough housing to simply exist and join the Arlington community. This, again, comes from the perspective of someone incredibly fortunate. The outlook for those less fortunate and making less money and needing affordable housing is incredibly grim in Arlington. Many current homeowners who worked themselves to the bone to own a house in Arlington 30-40 years ago would be impossibly walled out from even renting in Arlington in the current market. It is my personal opinion, but I believe that most opposition to these acts are driven by wealthy local homeowners who do not wish to see their lifestyle change. This gatekeeps housing and the Arlington community, creating a "haves" and "have nots" situation, which only serves as a detriment to our development as a community as a whole.

Hoping my opinion is heard,

Mitchell Cook - a young engineer hoping to one day own in Arlington