

From: Eugenia Grigoris

Sent: Thursday, September 7, 2023 11:50 AM

To: Eugene Benson; Kin Lau; Stephen Revilak; Melisa Tintocalis; Rachel Zsembery; Claire Ricker

Cc: Stephen DeCoursey; Len Diggins; Eric Helmuth; John Hurd; Diane Mahon; Jim Feeney

Subject: MBTA Communities Act Density Overlay Plan - Sept. 11, 2023 Meeting

To the Arlington Redevelopment Board:

The Arlington Redevelopment Board must reject the density overlay plan developed by the MBTA Communities Act Working Group (WG) to be presented to the ARB on September 11, 2023. The WG continues to promote a wildly overcompliant plan designed only to appeal to real estate developers to the detriment of the residents and taxpayers of this town.

The WG has consistently refused to present maps that would actually comply with the Commonwealth's requirements under the MBTA Communities Act. The WG has also refused to discuss what complying with the Act would really mean. In the case of our town, compliance means the creation of 2,046 units of multi-unit housing and not the 7,000 (or 10,000 or 15,000 or even 20,000) envisioned by the WG. Perhaps this should come as no surprise, since the WG appears to be made up largely of real estate developers and pro-density individuals and therefore, unrepresentative of the majority of the residents and taxpayers of Arlington.

The WG's overcompliant plan was described several times by the WG's members as "untethered" to the requirements of the MBTA Communities Act. Why? No mandate was given to the WG to overcomply. They were tasked only with developing a workable and realistic plan acceptable to the Commonwealth and to the residents and taxpayers of Arlington.

Most residents do not even know about the Act or the massive transformation of our town under the extreme plan put forth by the WG. The WG's plan was misrepresented in the post card that they eventually distributed a few days ago. The WG has held only one open meeting at the Town Hall in July, a few other "office hours" at Robbins Library mainly at times when most people cannot attend, and the Tuesday night WG meetings, where the public is not allowed to participate. At no time was actual compliance with the Act seriously discussed nor was any truly compliant map presented.

No studies of the impact on town finances, taxes, congestion, schools, infrastructure, and green/open spaces were done in preparation for the WG's plan.

Arlington is already one of the densest communities in Massachusetts. The transformation envisioned by the WG through the creation of market-rate units, while lucrative for developers and other pro-market rate density advocates who express a minority agenda, would be negative for the most important stakeholders – the people who live and work here.

Arlington is already built out and new market-rate housing will be higher priced. Developers will buy existing housing at a premium, demolish the property, and then build expensive high-density housing. They have every incentive to make such housing as expensive as possible to get the full benefit of their investment. In East Arlington, where a diversity of distinctive and good quality housing exists, including both single and two-family dwellings, the neighborhoods would in the long-run be eradicated. These very dwellings are what have always made East Arlington attractive to new families who appreciate the diversity of the neighborhood and proximity to transportation, schools, services and green spaces.

The WG's overcompliant plan will set in motion a transformation of the town that will be impossible to undo, rendering Arlington unrecognizable in the future. The plan must be rejected by the ARB in favor of a plan that is truly compliant with the law.

Thank you.

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