

September 8, 2023

To the Arlington Redevelopment Board,

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the extreme rezoning plans being considered for Arlington and I urge you to vote against any zoning overlay proposals presented by the MBTA Communities Working Group **that exceed the state's mandate** in Arlington.

As an Arlington resident, homeowner, and taxpayer, I am very concerned about the profound effect that the new zoning will have on the social and architectural fabric of our entire town, not just those neighborhoods within the overlay districts. Arlington is already one of the most densely settled towns in the area. The Working Group proposal to add thousands of units over the compliance requirement is simply too much. It goes far beyond any mandate that they had been given by the state.

The semi-clandestine way in which this plan was formulated – with little publicity and few opportunities for townwide participation or knowledge of the planning process – is of grave concern. Despite the last postcard – too little, too late – most people in town remain unaware of the scope and details of the zoning changes. The elderly and those without computers and internet access are especially vulnerable to such zoning changes, yet most know nothing about them. They remain powerless and forgotten, even though they are taxpaying residents and deserve to be apprised of such sweeping change to their town.

The Working Group, which includes at least three developers, provided few sketches or a three-dimensional model to assist us in visualizing the proposed changes. More concerning, there has not been a feasibility study nor a serious study of the possible effects on schools, police, fire, town services, traffic patterns, parking, and infrastructure in respect to the great population growth anticipated.

From an environmental perspective, the Working Group plan makes no effort to preserve the tree canopy or green space in overlay areas. Adequate setbacks that include room for trees are imperative when building four or more stories.

Ultimately, the Working Group's proposal – an excessive number of units, market rate/luxury housing, few (if any) **truly** affordable units, and perks for developers when they do include a few more affordable units - reveals itself to be nothing more than a gift to aggressive developers – an undisguised land grab with no benefit for current Arlington landowners.

From a social perspective, people of color will be unlikely have the funds to afford the new market-rate units, and when taxes and rents in the overlay districts increase, as they inevitably will, older and less affluent townspeople of all backgrounds will be forced out – the epitome of gentrification under the guise of providing more housing.

Deep incursions into the neighborhoods with the goal of demolishing and rebuilding is inequitable, elitist and unjust. Less affluent homeowners living in contiguous areas will eventually be coerced into selling their homes to developers, often at a lower rate, as no one other than a developer would wish to purchase a single-family house overshadowed by a monolith.

Diverse housing options including one, two, and three-family dwellings already exist in East Arlington as well as in other areas of the town. These provide housing for people in a variety of income levels. By future development of only 4-story and above structures in all the upzoned neighborhoods, we are limiting housing options for people seeking housing in Arlington to essentially, wealthy singles or couples who will move out when they have more than one child. This certainly marks a great change from the family-friendly town of the past.

Insecurity about one's home is a frightening, and ironic, consequence of this density agenda. You owe it to your voting constituents to protect their rental and home-owner property rights.

Truly affordable housing, developed in a responsible manner and built in areas that do not rob existing homeowners of their rightful property, must be Arlington's sole development goal. Let's begin by doing a great job with the placement and thoughtful construction of 2,046 units **as required**. If that works well, we can revisit rezoning again in the future.

Legislation that allows for unchecked development on a grand scale is bad for Arlington's future. Please reject the current plan that the Working Group will be presenting.

With sincere thanks,

Lygia Grigoris

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