

**Arlington County Housing Commission
Meeting Notes**

The Housing Commission convened its meeting at **7:10pm** on **September 14, 2023**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) Chair Kellen MacBeth
 Commissioner Anika Montgomery
 Commissioner Karen Serfis
 Commissioner Margaret McGilvray
 Commissioner Laura Saul Edwards
 Commissioner Michael Hemminger
 Commissioner Haley Norris
 Commissioner Katie Wenger
 Commissioner Paul Browne

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY)

ABSENT Commissioner Sara Rubalcava
 Commissioner Nikki Blake
 Commissioner Elizabeth Escovar

STAFF Alex McMillen, Melissa Danowski, Richard Tucker, Joel Franklin, Natasha Alfonso

[View the Meeting Recording Here](#)

Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

Dave Leibson announced that the Alliance for Housing Solutions is hosting its annual celebration on November 20th.

Approval of Notes – Action

Kellen MacBeth asked that a reference to a specific homeownership pilot program be more clearly articulated. Laura Saul Edwards made a motion to approve the notes, Karen Serfis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- [View the July 6, 2023, Housing Commission notes here.](#)

Plan Langston Boulevard – Action

Planning and Housing staff presented the draft report.

- [View the draft report here](#)

Jane Green provided public comment in support of the draft plan. She spoke in support of taller building heights and larger densities.

Jason Schwartz provided public comment in support of maximum buildings heights to help reach the Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP) goals. He noted the significant investment metro is committed to and stated that not allowing maximum densities around metro stations in Arlington would be leaving investment on the table. He also encouraged transit-oriented development along the highways in Arlington.

Ryan Arnold provided public comment noting that climate change is the worst it has ever been. He spoke in support of more housing to help curb carbon emissions. The more housing units we have in these areas the fewer number of cars we will need.

Hector Herrera provided public comment. He is from Falls Church but works long hours in Arlington. He detailed three examples of housing affordability difficulties in Arlington. Affordability is a huge issue and one that the County needs to help address.

Marjorie Green provided public comment in support of the draft plan. She wants the County to go further with the housing proposal and allow for maximum building height and densities to help attain the AHMP goals. She supports lot consolidation and colocation of housing to achieve these goals. She also noted that Cherrydale and East Falls Church should be part of the plan.

Clark Abbott provided public comment in support of maximum building heights and densities. He also wants to meet the AHMP goals by 2040.

Dave Leibson provided public comment in support of the plan but noted that Cherrydale and East Falls Church need to be included. He stated that the AHMP goals should be considered minimums, not aspirational goals.

Kellen MacBeth asked staff to reiterate what the draft plan estimates can be accomplished from a committed affordable unit (CAF) standpoint. Staff answered there is potential for 1,185 units by 2040 and 2,470 units by 2075. Kellen MacBeth said that timeframe is problematic because of how far away that is. He said we need to try to meet the goal that was agreed upon in the 2015 AHMP. He also said the county should include the Cherrydale and East Falls Church areas.

Kellen MacBeth asked how staff engaged with marginalized populations during their outreach for the draft plan. Staff answered they reached out to civic associations, they held several pop-up engagement stations at events such as farmers markets, they also reached out directly to property management of buildings along the corridor.

Kellen MacBeth asked how the plan will impact the disability community. Staff answered it will primarily help with connectivity. New greenways will be constructed as development occurs. Additionally, as new construction happens there will be more Type A units constructed to help house those in need of Type A units.

Doris Ray noted that this is a great opportunity to help add Type A housing to the housing portfolio that is also close to transit. She asked staff to consider how they can best do this.

Paul Browne asked why Cherrydale was not included in the draft plan. Staff answered Cherrydale was not included because it had a previous planning process, and the county wants to respect the input that went into that process. Cherrydale was not excluded due to a staff capacity issue. Paul Browne said there are several buildings in Cherrydale being held for redevelopment and that the current incentives don't seem to be enough to encourage development there now.

Paul Browne asked what percentage of the county's CAFs will be on Langston Boulevard. The AHMP calls for about 11% of the county's CAFs to be on Langston Boulevard by 2040. If they cannot accomplish that AHMP goal, and meet the plans current estimates, it will decrease to about 7% of the county's total CAFs.

Katie Wenger recommended the commission write a letter to the County Board ahead of the Request to Advertise. She also asked what the maximum heights in the draft plan are. Staff detailed the different maximums being considered in the different plan areas.

Kellen MacBeth asked why the residential edges were dropped from the plan. Staff answered that there was little community support for including the residential edges.

Michael Hemminger asked what was being proposed to preserve legacy businesses on the corridor. Staff answered they surveyed over 120 properties that had never been surveyed before to find a preservation strategy. Michael Hemminger asked staff to have intentional strategies to preserve these businesses.

Michael Hemminger asked a clarifying question regarding the affordability language in the plan. Staff answered they would revisit the language to ensure all incomes ranges were being included.

Kellen MacBeth asked how staff could include market rate affordable (MARK) unit preservation in the plan. Staff answered that they are looking to restart their multifamily reinvestment study. Staff also noted that MARK preservation incentives typically include county requirements such as committed affordability. MARK owners are not usually fond of requirements, but staff will continue to study this issue.

Doris Ray asked if the City of Falls Church has lessons learned from their new redevelopments. David Tarter answered they have begun putting much more housing near transit, they have a handful of new housing types in their developments including microunits, and they have been buying additional CAFs from developers among other solutions to increase housing types.

Laura Saul Edwards made a motion to send a letter to the County Board with a handful of recommendations that were discussed by the commission, Margaret McGilvray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 9-0.

Bonus Density Contributions – Information

Staff presented the item.

- [View the presentation here](#)

Kellen MacBeth asked if the bonus density calculation is determined by the General Assembly. Staff answered there is more discretion for bonus density contributions than base density contributions.

Kellen MacBeth asked if the state law that governs bonus density site plans is specific to Arlington County or covers all localities. Staff answered for the base it is applicable to only Arlington but that is not the case for bonus density.

Paul Browne asked if the value of the community benefits package is disclosed to the developer and can be disclosed to the public. Staff answered they are working on behalf of the County Board. If the County Board wishes to share exact valuations of community benefits, they can direct staff to do so. Anika Montgomery disagreed with staff's response, stating that those figures should always be available for public consumption. Michael Hemminger echoed Anika Montgomery's statement, saying the Housing Commission needs that information to help advise the County Board on housing projects.

Michael Hemminger asked if the 2001 Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO) amendment to encourage development was accompanied by a specific housing goal. Staff answered they are unaware

of a specific goal with that amendment. Staff did state this amendment was put in place to increase affordable housing and meet other county goals but has since been revised again to take a cap off how much bonus density could be earned.

Bingham/Silver Diner Site Plan – Action

Both staff and the Applicant gave presentations on the site plan project.

- [View the staff presentation here](#)

Kellen MacBeth said he would like to see the base ordinance met through on-site CAFs. Kellen MacBeth asked what the park will look like on site. The Applicant answered the County will lead a process to make that determination. Kellen MacBeth also encouraged the applicant to consider incorporating a meeting place for Arlingtonians to meet as they once did at the silver diner on site.

Paul Browne asked who Bingham Center Holdings was. The Applicant answered the owner is Tom Schoeltz. Paul Browne asked how much each CAF unit cost. Staff answered that units ranged from \$273k-\$304k per unit depending on unit type and size.

Doris Ray asked what the base contribution amount would be. Staff answered the base contribution amount is \$1.1M.

Doris Ray asked if the developer would include more than 2% of total units as Type A accessible units. The Applicant answered they will have 2 Type A accessible CAFs but are planning on having the 2% minimum of total units as CAFs. Doris Ray asked if the project would have power doors. The Applicant said they would get back to the commission on if the project has power doors but stated it would meet all ADA requirements.

Paul Browne made a motion to approve the staff recommendation, Margaret McGilvray seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 8-0.

Legislative Priorities – Action

Kellen MacBeth suggested the commission put forward their top four priorities for consideration by the County Board.

- [View the legislative priorities draft report here](#)

Kellen explained why he felt priorities numbered 2, 4, 6, and 8 were especially important to push forward to the County Board. The commission agreed with the four priorities, noting that the ones not chosen should still be considered at a later date.

Margaret McGilvray made a motion to adopt the four priorities discussed, Karen Serfis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 8-0.

Development Updates – Information

Staff explained that Fort Henry Gardens would go to the County Board in September for Amended and Restated loan documents. There are no material changes to the county loan. There were no further development updates.

- [View the Development Updates here](#)

Meeting adjourned at **10:21pm**.