

# Low Residential Study

## Q&A Session

September 2025



# Overview



**What is the Low Residential Study?**



**Why is the County doing the Low Residential Study?**



**What are the phases of the study?**



**What is the timeframe for the study?**



**Mapping tool**



**How can people participate in the study?**

# What is the Low Residential Study?

Board Charge – February 25, 2025

## **County Board Charge/Scope:**

Conduct a study to set limits on how much of a lot can be covered by impervious surfaces

## **Objective:**

Consider potential Zoning Ordinance amendments to support better stormwater and tree canopy outcomes



# What is the Low Residential Study?

## Scope of Work

### Consider whether to:

1. Keep lot coverage requirements alongside new impervious area limits
2. Include minimum (contiguous) plantable area requirements
3. Adjust yard and setback requirements to allow for increased tree conservation and planting
4. Establish impervious area limit based on lot size or zoning district





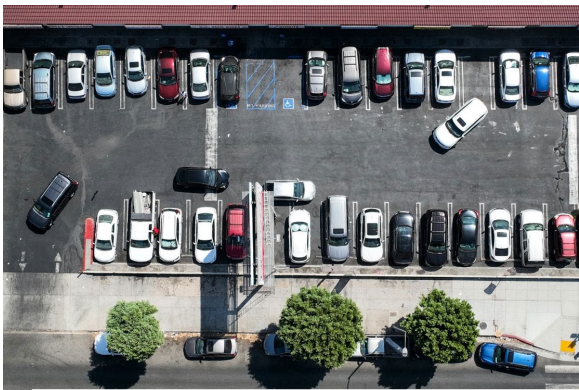


Photo Source: [Qian Weizhong/VCG/Getty Images](#)



Photo Source: [Southwest Boulder & Stone](#)

## Impervious Surface/Area

- Any surface material that significantly **impedes** **or prevents** the ground from absorbing water
- Examples:
  - roofs
  - buildings
  - streets
  - parking spaces
  - parking areas
  - concrete
  - asphalt
  - compacted gravel
  - compacted dirt



Photo Source: [cbreim.com](#)



# What is the Low Residential Study?

Board Charge – February 25, 2025

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Recommendations will be informed by and address:

- Benefits for stormwater and tree canopy
- Impacts to property owners and use
- Dynamics for older and newer homes
- Equity
- Administration and enforcement

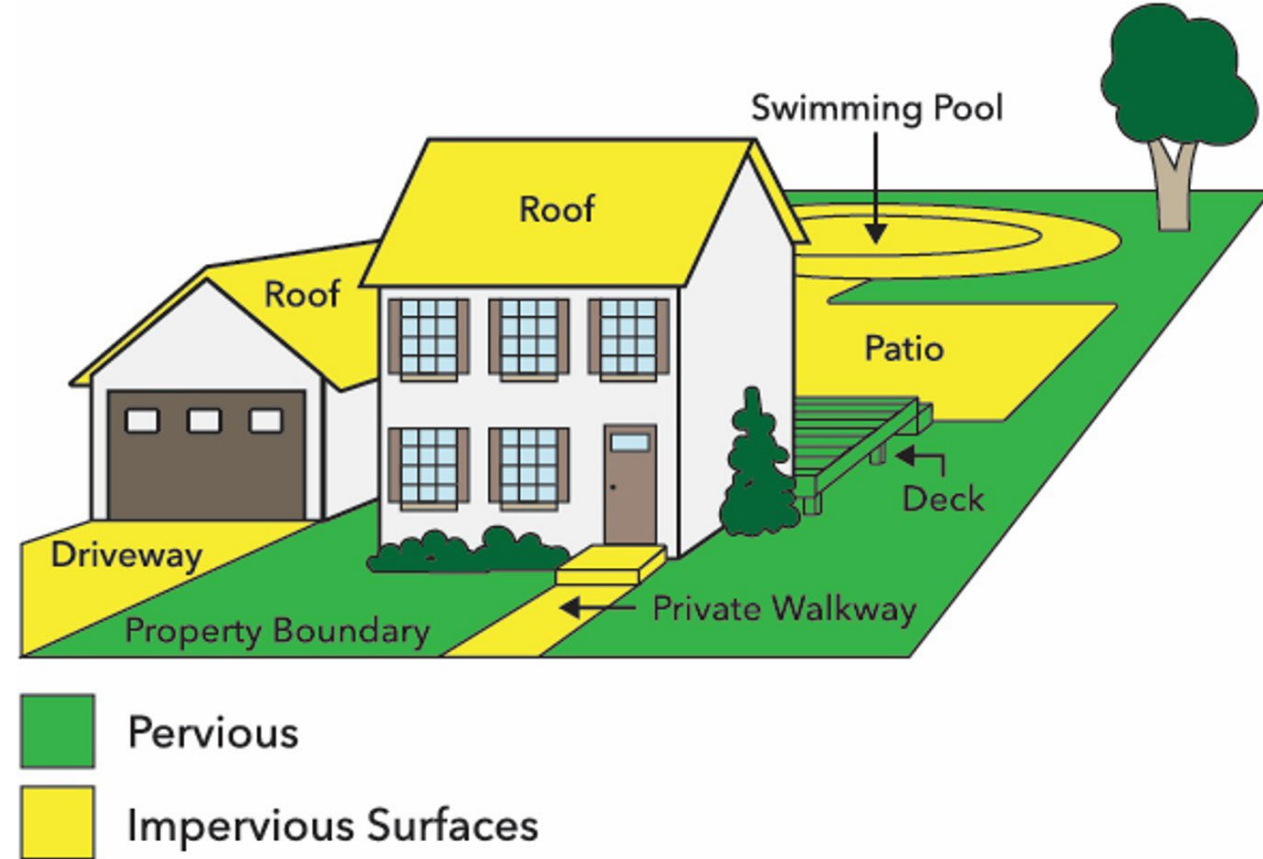
The study will not:

- Recommend changes to main building footprint or height limits
- Set absolute total square footage limits for lot coverage
- Consider potential changes to definition of *lot* coverage

# Why is the County doing the Low Residential Study?

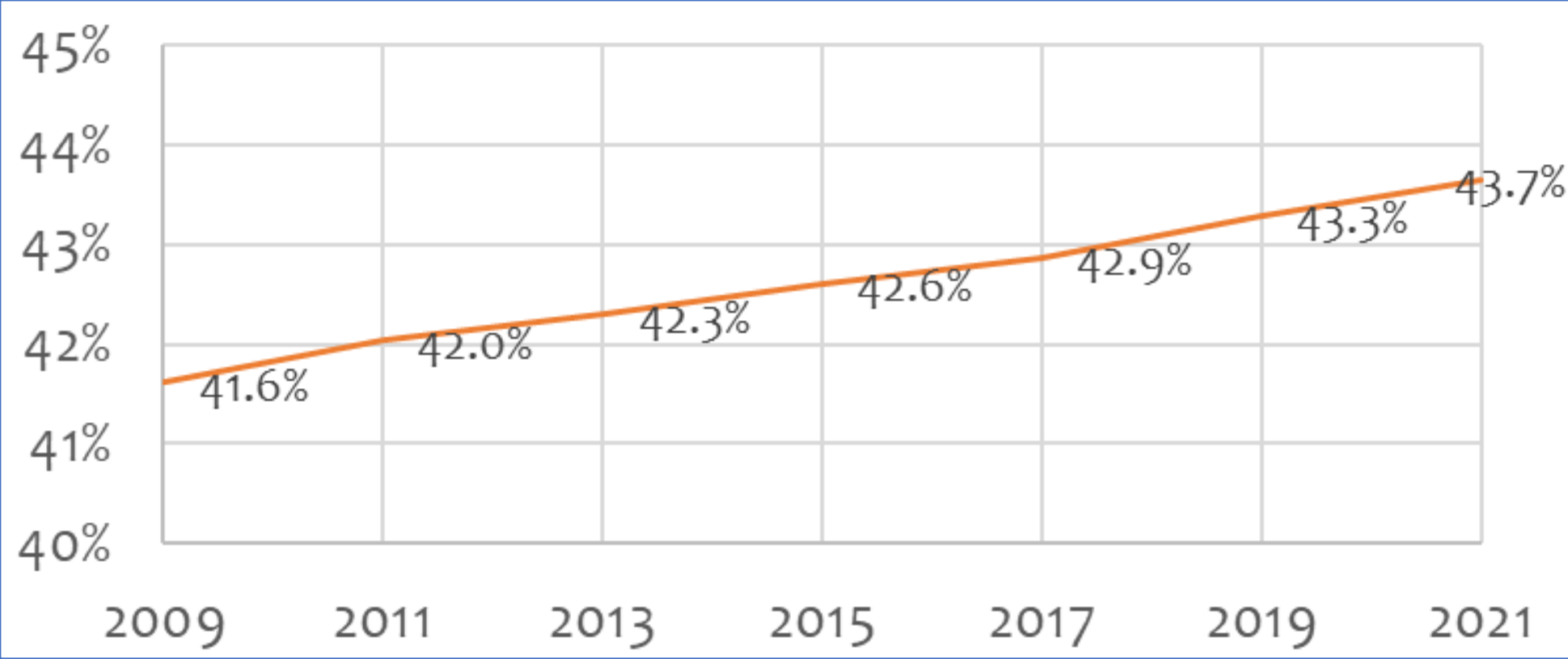
## Existing regulations do not effectively limit new impervious area

- Stormwater mitigation only required for new impervious area – not the entire lot
- Limited only to construction projects that disturb more than 2,500 sq. ft. of land
- “Lot coverage” requirements exclude most walkways and patio



# Why is the County doing the Low Residential Study?

Impervious surface Countywide has steadily increased since 2009

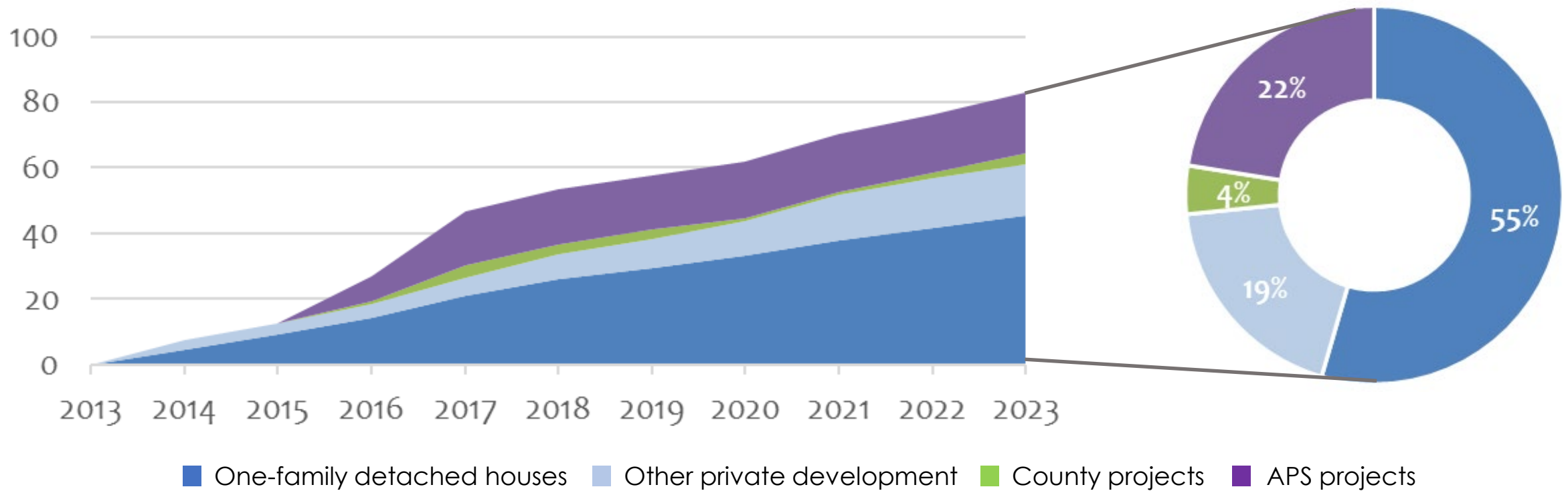


Impervious area as a percentage of Arlington County's total acreage  
--Excludes walkways, patios, and swimming pools  
Source: Arlington County GIS Mapping Center



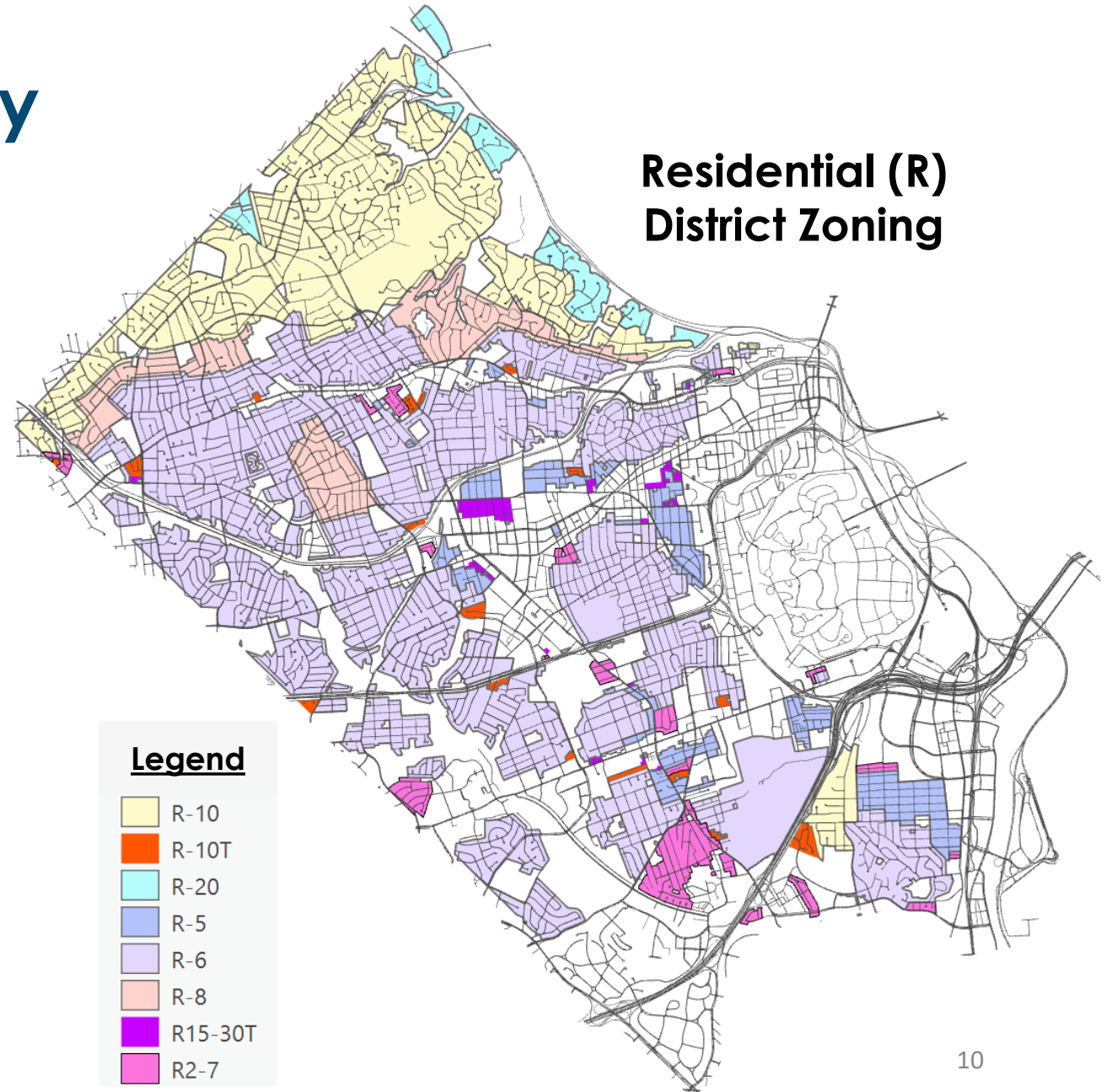
# Why is the County doing the Low Residential Study?

Projects for one-family detached houses are adding most of this impervious area



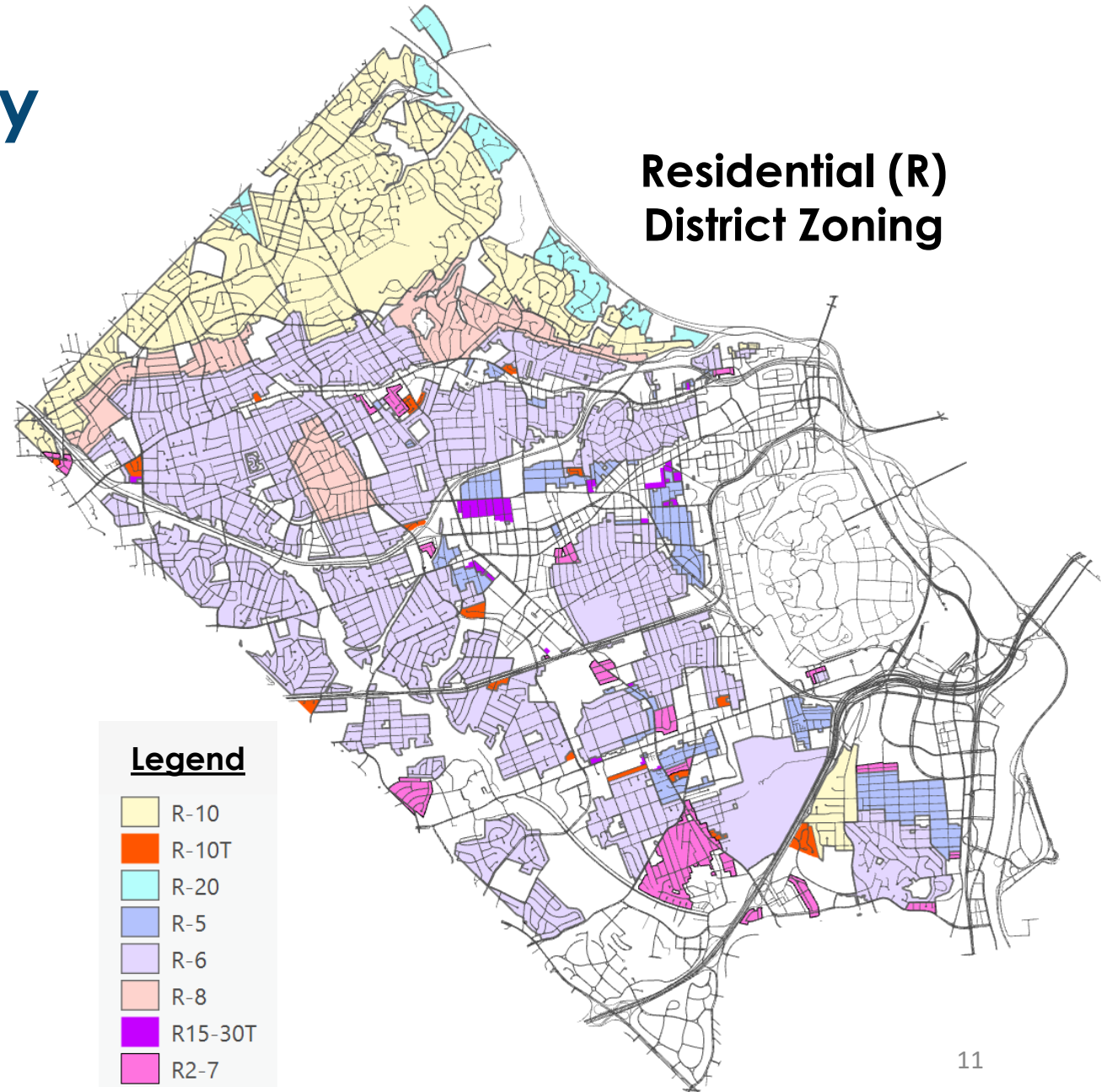
# Why focus on lower density residential areas?

- Accounts for approx. **49%** of Arlington
- Impervious area increase occurring mostly in these areas
- Property owners have experienced stormwater damage and tree canopy loss
- Space on these lots can reduce the burden on constructed stormwater systems and natural spaces



# Why focus on lower density residential areas?

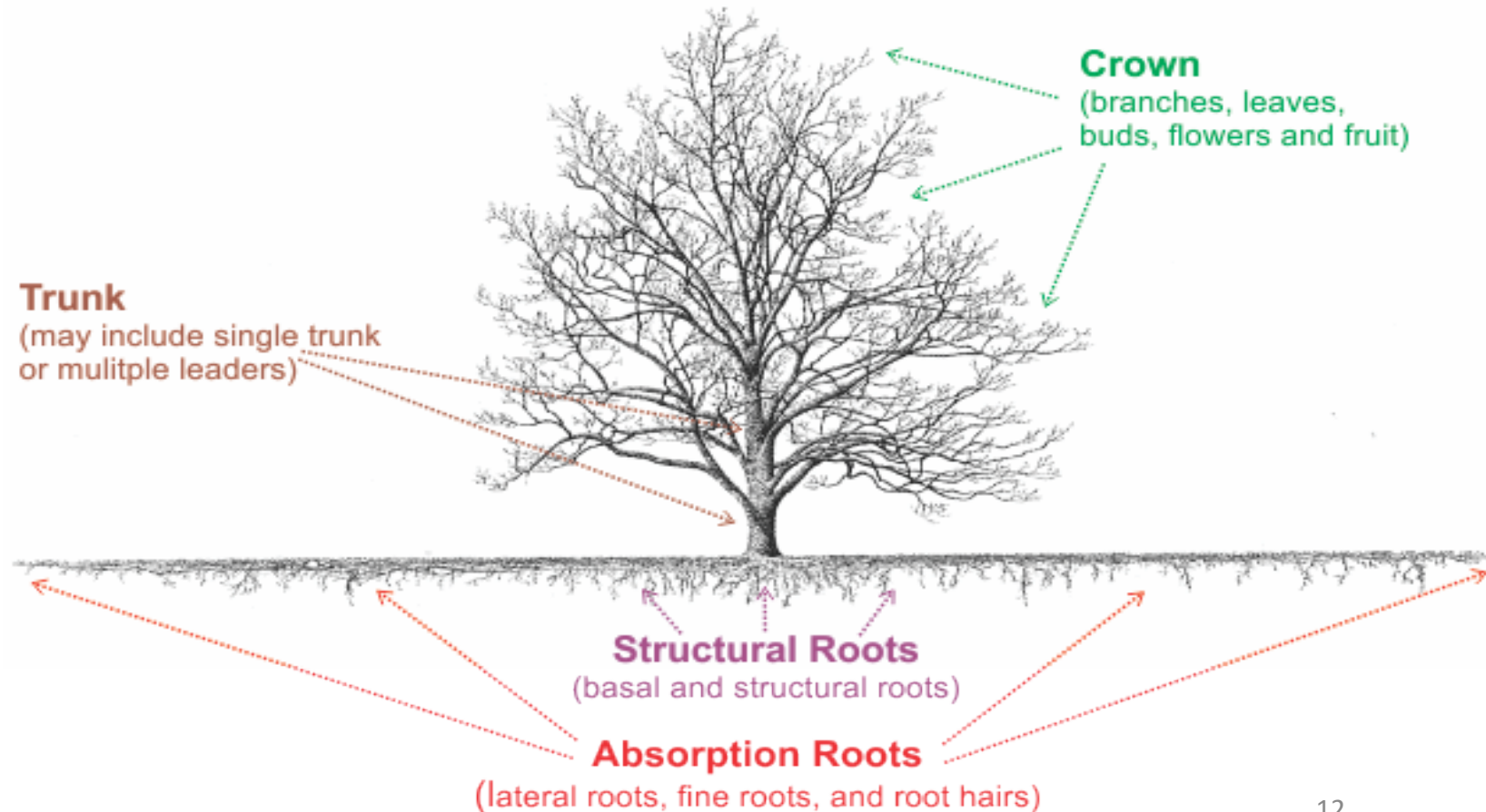
The County's ability to effectively manage stormwater and grow its tree canopy **must** account for development trends in lower density residential areas.



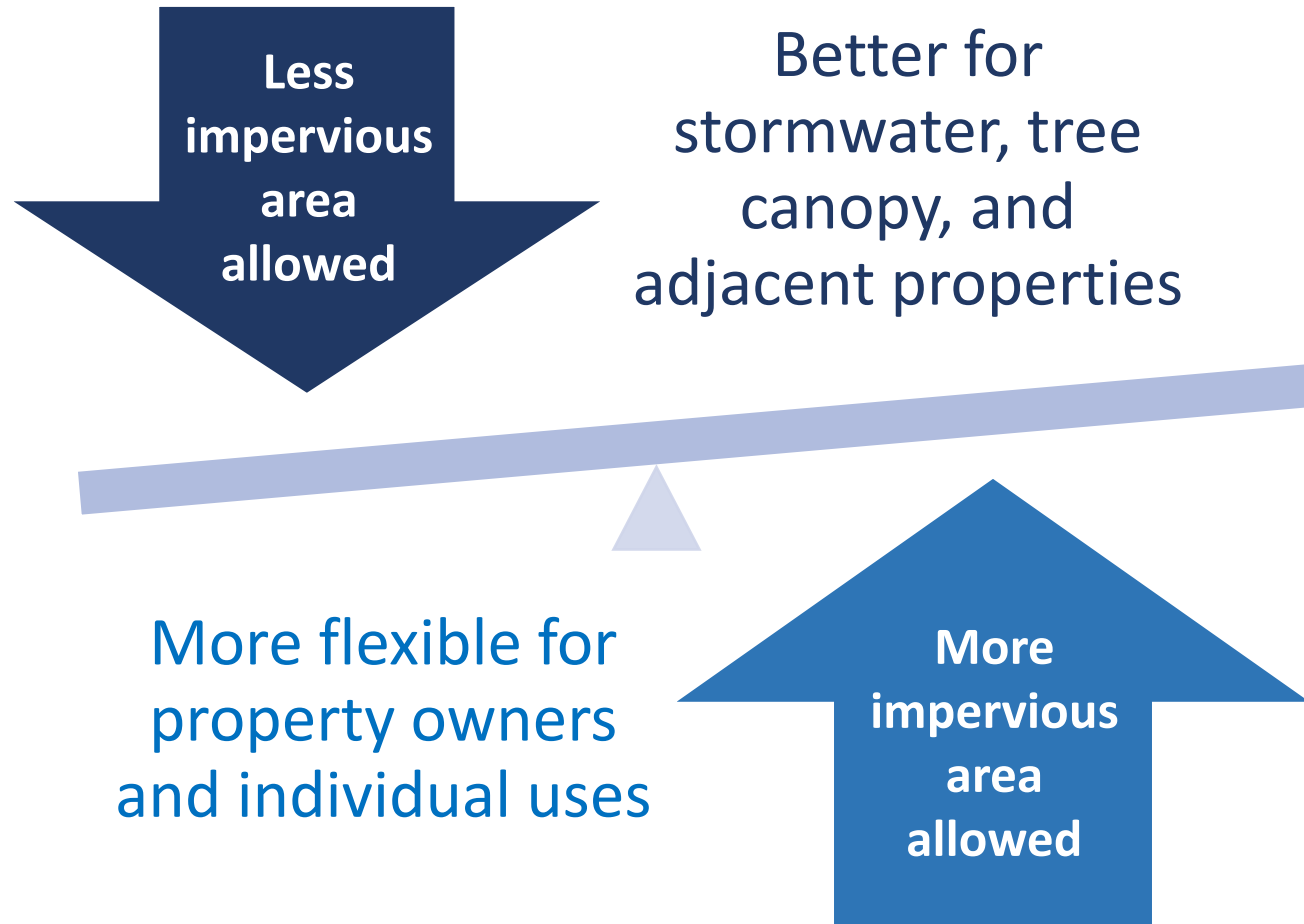


# Pervious areas are vital for trees

- Tree roots cover extensive area
- Large trees need contiguous pervious areas to support root space
- Not all pervious space on a lot can support trees



# Balancing Two Primary Considerations



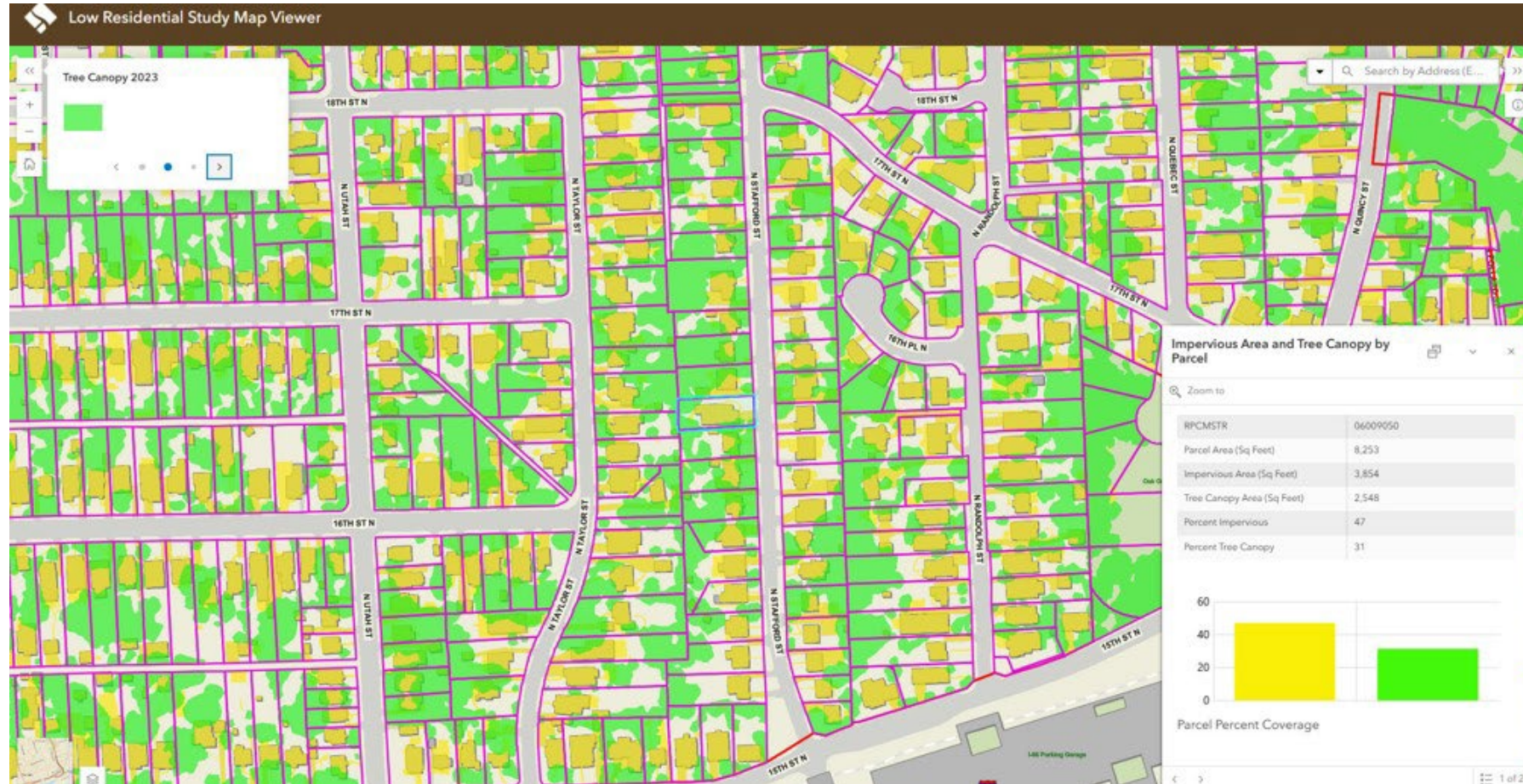
# What are the phases of the study?

## What is the timeframe for the study?





# LRS Mapping Viewer



[Try out the LRS Mapping Viewer yourself!](#)



# Public Engagement

## Involve Level

Communicate, Consult &

## Involve

Share how concerns/views were reflected in analyses and/or solutions and designs developed; share how inputs influenced the final decision or project.



- Up-to-date information on the study's progress
- Offer multiple opportunities for public involvement throughout the study's timeline
- Enable all interested stakeholders to get involved, regardless of barriers/challenges to participation
- Outreach measures including (but not limited to):
  - Social media
  - E-boards in County buildings
  - County newsletters
  - LRS webpage
  - Virtual Q&A info. sessions
  - In-person open houses
  - Project team at community events and festivals
- Meetings of the Planning Commission's Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC), with reps from:
  - Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC)
  - Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2)



# How Can I Participate?

- Attend [upcoming engagement events](#)
  - [Rock and Recycle Open House](#) on Sept. 13;
  - a pop-up at the [Green Community Tour](#) on Sept. 14;
  - a pop-up at [Green Valley Day](#) on Sept. 20;
  - a pop-up at [Westover Day](#) on Oct. 4
  - Two open houses in October and November
- For regular updates on the Low Residential Study, [subscribe to Planning + Building eNews](#) and/or [Stormwater Utility Updates](#).



# Questions?

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