

March 28, 2024

Mr. Christian Brandt  
Urban Planner  
Department of Planning and Zoning  
Alexandria, VA

Subject: AHAAC's review of Alexandria West Small Area Plan Draft Recommendations

Dear Christian,

The City of Alexandria tasked the Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (AHAAC) with monitoring the implementation of the housing provisions of the Beauregard Small Area Plan. In that role and as the City Council's advisor on affordable housing, we have reviewed the AWSAP recommendations. We find that the current draft recommendations lack key elements of the previous Beauregard Small Area Plan which were essential to addressing affordable housing in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. An overview of our concerns is below.

1. Our primary concerns stem from the apparent elimination of the neighborhood concept and the implementation funding mechanism that were integral parts of the Beauregard Small Area Plan (BSAP). The BSAP's approach, which included dedicated funding for affordable housing and required affordable housing plans for entire neighborhoods before approving any development has been eliminated from the current planning framework.

By contrast, the current draft recommendations focus more on how individual development projects will be analyzed when a Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) is submitted. This is a much less comprehensive approach than contemplated under the current BSAP. We believe the lack of broader planning and reduced funding commitments will result in a fragmented and less effective strategy for addressing affordable housing in the plan area.

2. We are concerned about the lack of tenant protections and relocation benefits offered to existing residents under the current plan. These protections are crucial to provide current residents with proper notice and assistance as redevelopment occurs, and to ensure they have access to affordable housing options created by the plan.
3. Lastly, we are concerned about the lack of clarity regarding allowable "by-right" density under the current plan. The BSAP established new density for the area based on the public benefits provided, much of which took the form of affordable housing. These density increases were memorialized by the creation of two new Coordinated Development District (CDD) zoning categories which referenced the BSAP. The proposed elimination of the existing BSAP creates confusion on what density is allowed by right and what density will be considered new. The AWSAP draft recommends that 10

percent of new density will be dedicated to affordable making the clarity on new versus by-right density of utmost importance.

The committee has valued the priority that each Council member has given to housing and the necessity of maintaining our goals and objectives. We are concerned that the above goals and objectives of the BSAP seem to be lost in the new draft.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the AWSAP draft recommendation, and we hope the City considers our concerns as the plan is finalized. We believe that addressing these issues will help ensure that the plan can benefit all in our community by effectively addressing affordable housing needs. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the City to address the critical issue of affordable housing in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy Faga". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Betsy Faga, Chair  
Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee

CC: Karl Moritz  
Jeff Farner  
Carrie Beach