

**DRAFT DENSITY BONUS HEIGHT ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT UNDER SECTION 7-703(B) OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE**

**APRIL 12, 2022 INFORMATIONAL MEETING  
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/RESPONSES**

**Please Note:** (1) Some responses have been augmented from what was noted at the April 12 Informational Meeting to add more clarity and relevant information to the answers; (2) the list of questions/comments/responses below includes additional questions/comments provided through email; (3) the order of the list is formatted by topic rather than the order received at the April 12 meeting or received via email; and (4) questions/comments to every extent possible are reflected verbatim.

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**ZONING ORDINANCE AND PROPOSED BONUS HEIGHT MAPS  
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/RESPONSES**

**(1) Where in the Zoning Ordinance are the Bonus Density provisions located?**

*Response:* [Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance](#) is referred to as the City’s Bonus Density and Height Program and can be accessed through the provided hyperlink. This section of the Zoning Ordinance allows for increases in floor area ratio, density and height, and reductions in required off-street parking as incentives for provision of low- and moderate-income housing. There are two elements of Section 7-700:

- Section 7-703(A) currently states (and is not proposed to change under the draft amendment) that: *Floor area ratio and density may not be increased pursuant to Section 7-700 by more than 30 percent of the floor area ratio and density otherwise permitted by this ordinance, unless a greater percentage increase is specifically designated in a small area plan chapter of the Master Plan. The increase permitted under Section 7-700 is exclusive of other floor area ratio and density increases allowable under any other section of this ordinance.*
- Section 7-703(B) currently states that: *Height may not be increased pursuant to this section by more than 25 feet beyond the height otherwise permitted by this ordinance; provided, however, that no building located in any zone or height district where the maximum allowable height is 50 feet or less may be allowed to exceed such height limits.*

**(2) As currently written, is Section 7-703(B) applicable in zones with maximum heights of 50 feet or is it applicable above 50 feet?** *Response:* As currently written, Section 7-703(B) states that: *Height may not be increased pursuant to this section by more than 25 feet beyond the height otherwise permitted by this ordinance; provided, however, that no building located in any zone or height district where the maximum allowable height is 50 feet or less may be allowed to exceed such height limits.*

**(3) What changes does the proposed text amendment to Section 7-703(B) entail?** *Response:* The proposed text amendment to Section 7-703(B) would read as follows:

**Proposed**  
**7-703(B)**

1. Height increases pursuant to this section are not permitted for single-family, two-family, or townhouse dwellings.
2. Height may not be increased pursuant to this section by more than 25 feet beyond the height otherwise permitted by this ordinance; provided, however, that no building located in any zone where the maximum allowable height is less than 45 feet or height district where the maximum allowable height is 50 feet or less may be allowed to exceed such height limit.

**(4) Can Section 7-703(A) and 703(B) occur by right or is land use approval required?** *Response:* A public hearing Special Use Permit (SUP) is required when an applicant would like to utilize the provisions of Section 7-700.

**(5) Where can the City's Height District's provisions and map be found?** *Response:* The City's height district provisions are found in [Section 6-400 of the Zoning Ordinance](#). The City's height district map can be found online at [Height District Map](#) (*Please be sure that your browser is fully up-to-date as you click onto the hyperlink; once the map appears, click on any outlined height district on the map and information on that given height district will appear in the lower left corner of the map*).

**(6) Please show the actual areas you are speaking of. Do not assume that we know.** *Response:* As requested, the maps from the April 12 Informational Meeting have now been augmented to include overlays of community names, key street names and Metro stations. You can find the hyperlinks to the City's Bonus Height webpage and to the April 12 augmented maps, with overlays, below (*You may need to open the Internet Explorer symbol in your lower left-hand corner once you click on the hyperlink*):

- Bonus Height Webpage: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/bonus-height>
- April 12 Maps with Augmented Overlays (*These will **not** represent the final map post April 12*): <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/Updated-Maps.pdf>

**(7) During Patrick Silva's brief, are you able to define "low, medium, and high" potential use of the amendment to 7-700?** *Response:* The "Likelihood of Use" map was intended to convey staff perspectives regarding the very general likelihood that the

proposed bonus height provision would be used in each of the zones which would be implicated as part of the proposed update (i.e., those zones with height maximums of 45 feet – 50 feet). This likelihood determination is based on a given zone’s bulk and use regulations, with “low” likelihood areas being a combination of having multi-family dwellings as a prohibited use and lower maximums for floor area ratio; “medium” likelihood areas allow multi-family dwellings as a permitted use, but still have lower maximums for floor area ratio, and “high” likelihood areas allow multi-family dwellings as a permitted use and have higher floor area ratio maximums. This map ***does not*** include site conditions and regulatory considerations which must be taken into account in given zones, keeping in mind that such considerations can potentially impact the feasibility of the use of this proposal and the project. For example, zoning as well as other regulatory factors such as height districts may impact a property owner’s ability to request the height bonus. On a related note, market conditions could also impact feasibility of use on a given site in a given area.

**(8) When you provide a “code” please state what that means.**

*Response:* The City will be more mindful of that as we provide future information. In the meantime, the City’s Zoning Code is available online. You can access it here: <https://library.municode.com/va/alexandria/codes/zoning>. Once you have clicked onto the website, you can enter a search for the zone in which you are interested. That will provide you with regulations regarding the particular zone. *(You may need to open the Internet Explorer symbol in your lower left-hand corner once you click on the hyperlink)*

**(9) Why is the "Washington Street district" not extended to Abingdon and Slaters Lane which falls in the Old and Historic District limiting height along the Parkway and Washington Street below 50'?**

*Response:* Yes; Washington Street is fully within the Old and Historic District. In any future map, staff will be sure to reflect those boundaries. In the meantime, you can see the boundaries of the historic districts outlined in red by clicking onto the City’s Map Viewer’s hyperlink *(You may need to open the Internet Explorer symbol in your lower left hand corner once you click on the hyperlink):*

<https://geo.alexandriava.gov/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=historicpreservationviewer>

**(10) Is this applicable to the City’s Coordinated Development District provisions under [Section 5-600 of the Zoning Ordinance](#)?**

*Response:* Yes; unless otherwise prohibited, this proposed update is applicable to Coordinated Development District (CDD) zones which have height maximums between 45 feet – 50 feet. *(You may need to open the Internet Explorer symbol in your lower left-hand corner once you click on the hyperlink.)*

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- (11) **Is there information online from the April 12 Informational Meeting that the public can access?** *Response:* Yes; there is a City webpage for the proposed Bonus Height Text Amendment, and it can be accessed here:  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/bonus-height>

Additionally, comments can be submitted to the Department of Planning & Zoning (703.746.4666):

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- (12) **This is not a question but a comment. A public session on April 12 for a major proposal that would come before Council in May is NOT full public input. We are just seeing this for the first time and as you see there are many questions. You need to have more meetings on this proposal.** *Response:* There will continue to be other opportunities to comment including another Community Meeting anticipated in May. The Planning Commission received an informational briefing at its April 7 public hearing; dockets and videos for Planning Commission public hearings are always available on the City's website at [https://alexandria.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view\\_id=57](https://alexandria.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=57) and those hearings are public. The Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee (AHAAC) held a briefing on this matter on April 13, and that meeting was announced at the April 12 Bonus Height Informational public event because AHAAC's meeting too was fully open to the public. **Another virtual Information Meeting on this topic will be held on Thursday, May 19, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., as announced in a May 5 eNews. Anyone who wishes to participate can register through the Bonus Height webpage under Meeting Materials at <https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/bonus-height>.** Moreover, the City welcomes comments via email; please see the email addresses above. Comments can also be made at the Planning Commission and City Council public hearings which are currently anticipated to be held in June.

- (13) **In which zones would this proposal apply?** *Response:* While a definitive map of every site where this tool would apply is not readily produceable, staff is working to provide more clarification as to its applicability. Additional information will be shared on May 19. In terms of its non-applicability, the proposed text on page 2 states circumstances where it is proposed not to be applicable.

- (14) **My reading of the current Section 7-700 is that the height limit for the Historic District of Old Town is 50 feet. My reading of the proposed change is that the height bonus would apply to “affordable housing” in areas with a current height limit of 45 feet. If that reading is correct, would this proposed change in any way apply to, or be able to be waived for, any building in Alexandria’s Historic District, specifically in Districts 1 and 2? If my reading is incorrect, please explain in plain English (without copying the legalese gobbledegook that’s out there and hard to interpret) how this new ordinance might change the landscape of Old Town Alexandria. For info, I think adding as much as 25 feet to a 45-foot height limit in any area of Alexandria is a bad idea. We don’t want all of the remaining space in Alexandria to look like Potomac Yard or like the drab and unsightly housing that has gone up using prefab brick in North Old Town.** *Response:* The proposal would not be applicable to single-family, two-family or townhouse dwellings. Also, no changes have been proposed to Old Town height districts or other height districts under this proposal. Where a Small Area Plan provides guidance that allows an increase in height over what is currently permitted, those height increases are typically implemented through a rezoning, which requires actions by the Planning Commission and City Council following public hearings.
- (15) **Developers have new areas (Eisenhower, West End, North Old town) for high density, all with better street capacity -- we can and should protect areas from the developers demand for MORE. Zoning is one area where the city can protect the historic character and town-feeling.** *Response:* Thank you for your comment. The City is looking at initiatives, such as the bonus height amendment, to introduce incremental amounts of affordable housing into neighborhoods across the City where such housing is harder to achieve. Bonus height and density Special Use Permit (SUP) applications would continue to be subject to the public comment and the public hearing review process to promote consistency with the character of the neighborhood.
- (16) **The 703 (b) is a bit of "double speak" to me -- “Height may not be increased pursuant to this section by more than 25 feet beyond the height otherwise permitted by this ordinance; provided, however, that no building located in any zone or height district where the maximum allowable height is 50 feet or less may be allowed to exceed such height limits.” Can you give an example of this? What would be the Max height? Why is this necessary to change zoning, if a waiver can be granted? Where are the "zone or height district" areas? Shouldn't the city retain these tools as a control for density, FAR and off-site parking on new development?** *Response:* In response to the request for maximum heights, that would depend on several factors, such as the site conditions and location, applicable zoning and other regulations. In terms of where height districts can be found, please refer to the response under #5 above with guidance to the height district zoning provisions and the height district map. This potential zoning change and other tools are being proposed to create additional affordable housing options.

- (17) Who will have the authority to determine considerations of neighborhood character and/or the architectural and design features of the developments?** *Response:* A public hearing Special Use Permit (SUP) application is required to utilize the provisions of Section 7-700. As such, the public hearing is subject to staff review for consistency with zoning regulations and for potential impacts on the neighborhood character. Public noticing of SUPs includes placarding of the site and a legal notice with the timing of public hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council during which, or before, public comment is invited.
- (18) How many affordable units could be added, at the maximum, if this proposal passes?** *Response:* Currently, under Section 7-700, Bonus Height is not being used as widely as Bonus Density. This proposed change is intended to increase the use of Bonus Height, but the City does not yet know to what extent this change will be used, particularly since it will not be applicable in all zones which allow residential uses. The City will track the number of applications received on an annual basis to gauge future use and, with that data, the City will be able to assess its utility in terms of increasing housing production and distribution.
- (19) About how many additional units would this change bring, for the zones outlined in green?** *Response:* The number of units would depend on zoning as well as other regulatory specifications for an area and site conditions.
- (20) If the purpose of incentivizing developers is to create affordable housing, then why don't you have a better idea of how much closer to your goal this obfuscation of Old Town would get you?** *Response:* As noted further above, the City will track applications and, through that data, will assess its utility in terms of location and numbers. Initiatives like this connect additional density and height to community benefits like housing affordability.
- (21) Council has expressed interest in doing away with single-family zoning and permitting multi-family in all residential areas. Were that to happen, this type of bonus density with extraordinary height could happen anywhere, correct?** *Response:* This proposal would not apply to single-family, two-family and townhome dwellings; use of the provisions of Section 7-700 requires a public hearing Special Use Permit (SUP) which would not change under this proposal, and the 25-foot existing maximum allowance under Section 7-703(B) would not change. Twenty-five (25) feet enables up to a maximum of two floors. The SUP process entails staff analysis and input, and the public hearings enable public comment on design and other factors related to the SUP request.
- (22) Specifically state which areas of Alexandria that are NOT Old Town you are looking at?** *Response:* The areas would depend on the zoning and other regulatory factors as noted earlier. **Staff is preparing a map to show all areas of the City where the proposal would potentially apply.**
- (23) What percentage of the proposed affordable units to be supplied by 2030 will be in Old Town?** *Response:* The use of this proposal throughout the City has not yet been

quantified. If approved, its use by someone with a legal interest in a parcel will depend on a number of site and regulatory factors, as stated previously, along with market conditions, all of which determine project feasibility.

- (24) **Will a commercial zoning text amendment take into account the lot size and FAR?** *Response:* Implementation of the proposal on a given site would be subject to the applicable zoning regulations of the site and other regulatory factors set forth in the Zoning Ordinance for the area in which the site is located.
- (25) **Do commercial buildings in Old Town have the same limitations as residential and if not, what are they. Could the new development involve building on commercial sites in Old Town?** *Response:* Only zones which allow multi-family use would be eligible, provided other regulations, site conditions and market factors do not preclude such use. Section 7-703(B) would continue to apply to mixed use projects and continuum of care facilities as it does today.
- (26) **The Board of Architectural Review did not approve the Heritage, rightly. But it was passed by City Council. The system did NOT work.** *Response:* As an elected body, City Council has authority over most land use matters. Per [Section 10-107](#) of the Zoning Ordinance, any decision of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) may be appealed to City Council by either the applicant or through a petition that is signed by at least 25 property owners. When City Council reviews an appeal, they make their decision using the same criteria listed in the Zoning Ordinance that the BAR uses.
- (27) **When is this proposed zoning text amendment going to go to BAR for discussion? Height is a critical factor in making new structures compatible with the existing, generally 2-3 story townhouses in Old Town. As pointed out in the discussion, this increase in potential heights from 50 feet to 75 feet was determined to be inappropriate by the neighborhood and importantly the BAR for Heritage.** *Response:* Zoning text amendments are not reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The Planning Commission will review the proposed amendment and pass along any recommendation to City Council for its review and action. The BAR will review any proposed development within either of the historic districts on a case-by-case basis. The BAR will make a determination regarding the appropriateness of the proposed height of each project using the criteria located in Section 10 of the City of Alexandria Zoning Code.  
<https://library.municode.com/search?stateId=46&clientId=980&searchText=10-100&contentType=CODES>

- (28) **This seems to me like a good change. We need to both produce more committed affordable units, and also, where possible, remove limits on the supply of market rate units, which are also in short supply, and which have been shown to improve affordability all along the scale.** *Response:* The City agrees on the importance of expanding housing production and affordability, as well as the importance of housing choices where households can readily access services and amenities. The City is pleased to share this ongoing work with its private and non-profit partners and with the community.
- (29) **I wonder if the bonus density for affordable housing will include the affordable housing on-site applying for it? We need the affordable units in our neighborhood if height is increased.** *Response:* The added height would be in exchange for units affordable to low- and moderate-income households on-site per Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance. It is anticipated that affordable housing providers, who opt to apply for Section 7-700, would use the zoning provision to retain (through redevelopment) and to expand their respective committed affordable housing resources.
- (30) **There is growing resident interest in community walkability and more options for housing forms. Are staff doing any work to evaluate permitting duplexes and other medium-density housing in areas restricted to single-family zoning?** *Response:* This proposal is not applicable to single-family dwellings. That said, the City does recognize in many of its policies the importance of providing housing options that are in walkable and multi-modal based transportation communities. Such policies are tied to several key goals in the City's [2017-2022 Strategic Plan](#) which focus on *creating walkable, service enriched and transit oriented communities within a caring, kind, compassionate, fair, just and equitable City that supports an affordable and livable community for all.* The City's [Housing Master Plan](#) also encourages location of affordable housing near transit.
- (31) **I am against any change in zoning height that doesn't include a guarantee of at least 75% low-cost housing. Too much intimacy is lost by allowing gigantic towers on otherwise small-scale city blocks. Del Ray has spent too much effort touting itself as an "old-timey" neighborhood to throw that image away on grandiose buildings that accommodate only the affluent and wealthy.** *Response:* Consideration of neighborhood character and context is important when developing affordable and market-rate housing as well as other types of development. The affordable housing required by Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance (at a 2:1 ratio, i.e., two market-rate units in exchange for every one affordable unit) was calibrated to maximize the community benefit of the zoning provision while ensuring an adequate incentive for the developer to apply for the optional increase in density and/or height. Based on the economics of producing and operating committed affordable housing, it is unlikely that a market-rate developer would apply to use the zoning incentive if the ratio were 1:4 (one market-rate unit in exchange for every four affordable units).
- (32) **The Mt. Vernon Business Area Plan design guidelines clearly limit the overall height of a building and require the third floor to be set back. There are also**



**building massing restrictions. Are you proposing these guidelines to be able to be overridden through the SUP process as part of this text amendment?**

*Response:* The Special Use Permit (SUP) public hearing process will consider the design guidelines' intent for elements such as scale transitions and relationship with existing buildings as part of development review process. Whether projects will request bonus height is subject to such factors as applicable zoning and other regulatory factors; site conditions; and overall feasibility including market and development economics. Staff would review the character of the project within the context of the zoning and related regulatory review, and the community is able to comment as well since SUPs are subject to public hearing.

**(33) How will this impact the density bonus policy proposed in the Arlandria-Chirilagua Small Area Plan?** *Response:* It does not change or impact the primary intent of the Arlandria-Chirilagua Plan. Whether projects will request bonus height is subject to regulatory and other factors.

**(34) How would this apply to the recently rezoned hospital site; although rezoned as townhomes, couldn't the developer come back later and ask for an up-zoning?** *Response:* So long as the hospital site continues to be zoned for townhomes, the proposed amendment would not apply. Any future requests to change the zoning would be considered through a review process that includes opportunity for public comment and input. While a rezoning request is not anticipated, it is true that anyone with a legal interest in a parcel could request a rezoning. Rezoning requests are subject to consistency with the City's Master Plan, a community process and approval by City Council. The property owner has not indicated an intention to change the townhouse and single-family zoning that was approved for the hospital site.

**(35) EYA built Robinson Landing and used prefab brick which normally would not be approved. Plus, no mention was made of the reduced parking requirement that I understand is also an initiative.** *Response:* In staff's analysis of the submittal for Robinson Landing, staff found the building material to be of high quality. Also, this proposed text amendment does not address building materials or reduce parking requirements.

**(36) What is the James Bland type of townhouse?** *Response:* It is a model that has been brought forward by EYA, where you have a full 3 levels of living space, with a partial 4<sup>th</sup> floor, which includes either a family room or additional bedroom, plus a large rooftop open space.

**(37) Can zoning also be a tool to prevent Airbnb 'conversion' or usage of these denser housing projects?** *Response:* An Airbnb must comply with the residential regulations for the zone in which it is located, namely, occupancy, parking, etc. Additionally, Airbnb's must register with the City through its [Short-term Residential Registry](#) found online.

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## PARKING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/RESPONSES

- (38) **We're talking about increasing height limitations. With an area only 15.35 sq. miles Alexandria is the densest City in Virginia. Is anyone looking at population growth, population densities and the quality of life of Alexandrians?** *Response:* The Department of Planning & Zoning tracks population and other demographics for the City, and the City is a lead participant in the decennial Census Count. Slides 3-5 from the April 12 Bonus Height Informational Meeting provide background on population, household size, housing supply, income and poverty. Every small area plan that provides for an increase in population and employment also provides for the public facilities needed to support that increase (transportation, schools, open space, and more). In addition, every development application considers infrastructure adequacy.
- (39) **How will parking and infrastructure be updated to accommodate any additional units?** *Response:* Any request for additional density and/or height must demonstrate that the infrastructure and parking proposed are adequate to meet the development's requirements.
- (40) **The City Council granted a waiver for parking to Robinson Landing which is definitely NOT affordable housing. They keep giving away parking in the Historic District without any thought.** *Response:* Parking reductions may be considered on a basis other than affordable housing. Staff and Council take into account many factors when recommending or approving a parking reduction. For Robinson Landing, there were 142 parking spaces required for multi-family units, and 132 spaces were provided (about an 8% reduction), which included some tandem spaces shared by the same units. This allowed for 2 parking spaces for each multi-family unit, which exceeded the average car ownership of 1.55 cars/household in Alexandria. Residential visitor parking was provided to be shared with the commercial uses in the garage, and so not as many dedicated multi-family spaces were needed to accommodate visitors. There was also a reduction in the retail/restaurant parking requirement which took into account the highly walkable and transit-oriented area, as well as observed parking occupancies in the area which peaked at about 81%. It was also noted that no parking is required for restaurants in the Central Business District, and the Robinson Landing development is only one block outside of that area.
- (41) **If you update your data on parking at affordable and market-rate affordable housing, please canvas the neighboring streets to ensure you have the full picture. Many apartment complex residents park on city streets, not in the complex's parking lot.** *Response:* Thank you for your comment.

- (42) **What if any consideration is given to school capacity?** *Response:* Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is part of the interdepartmental development review process for any project.
- (43) **Alexandria has a number of stormwater and sewage issues; how will these higher density units impact that?** *Response:* Vertical height does not increase runoff from the site; it is only impacted by the pervious areas such as asphalt areas. For sewer, applicants need to follow guidance in the City’s Memorandum to Industry 6-14, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services.
- (44) **What is the anticipated impact of this proposal on the environment, particularly as it relates to the Environmental Action Plan (EAP)?** *Response:* Higher density housing has a lower energy use per person and supports the [EAP 2040](#) lower carbon emission targets per person. In addition, the [2019 Green Building Policy](#) requires greater energy efficiency in new buildings than code-compliant buildings. While the energy efficiency of each building improves, the total carbons emissions increase with higher population. As the amount of clean renewable energy in the electric grid increases, the total carbon emissions for the City will also go down.
- (45) **How does this proposal interface with Small Area Plans in terms of height regulations?** *Response:* Where the Small Area Plan provides guidance that allows an increase in height over what is currently permitted, those height increases are typically implemented through a rezoning, which requires actions by the Planning Commission and City Council following public hearings.

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### HOUSING AFFORDABILITY QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/RESPONSES

- (46) **Is there currently an inventory of vacant apartments and any analysis of affordability index of those apartments?** *Response:* Updates on affordable housing rental and homeownership opportunities, first-time homebuyer and condominium trainings, and other housing resources, can be received by signing up for the [City’s eNews Affordable Housing Opportunities](#) notices (select “Affordable Housing”). Updates on the availability of affordable rental units are also posted on the Office of Housing’s Renter Resources page under **Current Availability:** <https://www.alexandriava.gov/housing-services/renter-resources#AffordableRentalOptions>. It is natural for affordable housing providers to advertise vacancies as turnover occurs across all housing developments; renters may opt to relocate for a variety of reasons (personal, work-related, or due to other factors).
- (47) **Clarify the number of units created in Alexandria annually.** *Response:* In terms of Alexandria’s annual housing production, Alexandria has been producing approximately 1,100+ market-rate and affordable units per year in recent years. Pursuant to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government’s (COG) Regional Housing Initiative (RHI). This represents an annual increase of approximately 300 more units per year. Of the 300 additional units, the goal is for 75% to be affordable to low- and moderate-income

households.

**(48) How does one apply for an affordable unit produced by this? To the builder or the city?** *Response:* A interested applicant would need to apply to the owner of the building or its leasing agent. The City helps to market available units and monitors eligibility. Interested renters are encouraged to sign up for the [City's eNews Affordable Housing Opportunities](#) notices (select "Affordable Housing").

**(49) What is the difference between low-income housing and affordable housing?**

*Response:* Affordable rental housing is defined as housing that is affordable to households with incomes at or below 60% of the area median income (AMI). Workforce rental housing is defined as housing that this affordable between 61% and 80% AMI. In the City, more deeply affordable units, those at 40% AMI or below, are commonly referred to as lower income, or deeply affordable, units. More specifics regarding these income categories for Alexandria can be found on slide 4 of the April 12 Bonus Height Informational Meeting presentation which is located on the [Bonus Height webpage](#). Definitions of low- to moderate-income housing vary across the region. *(You may need to open the Internet Explorer symbol in your lower left-hand corner once you click on the hyperlink.)*

**(50) Is there an expected AMI the city has for when developers want to seek additional density?** *Response:* Rental units generated through Section 7-700 are affordable at 60% of the AMI. For-sale units are priced to be affordable to households with incomes generally between 70% and 100% AMI.

**(51) For the affordable units built by developers using the bonus height provision, will those affordable units stay affordable, or do they "sunset" and convert to market rate after a certain time?** *Response:* The City's current policy is for rental units constructed through Section 7-700 to be affordable for 40 years, and affordable for-sale units have resale restrictions, enforced through deeds of covenant, which require equity sharing with subsequent purchasers to keep units affordable for at least 40 years after each transaction.

**(52) Is there a way that data on who is applying and receiving affordable housing in the City can be made public without providing personal data so that the public can know if recipients are: (1) residents of the City at the time of application, (2) working in the City or (3) from outside the City and not working in the City?** *Response:* This data has not been tracked historically by affordable housing providers in the City. The City does not have a requirement that a renter reside or work in the City in order to qualify for a committed affordable unit since eligibility is based on income/need. Beneficiaries of the City's down payment and closing cost assistance are required to reside and/or work in the City for at least six months prior to applying for such assistance.

- (53) Would the City need to fund affordable housing under this proposal and if so what would the cost to the City be?** *Response:* The cost of building and operating affordable units generated through Section 7-700 are borne by the developer. The City's financial assistance is limited to offering down payment and closing cost assistance to qualified first-time homebuyers, if available, for affordable for-sale units. These funds are typically sourced through federal HOME allocations and the City's Housing Trust Fund which is funded by developer monetary contributions.
- (54) What are the 2020-2021 adopted housing contributions policies that are to be codified? They seemed to have moved to 'practical updates but NRCA would like to know what they are?** *Response:* The policies in question are a subset of the policies that were developed as a result of the 2019-2020 Housing Contributions Workgroup process; the full policies are summarized here: <https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/housing/info/affordablehousingcontributionpolicyupdatessummary=december2020.pdf>. The contribution recommendations, proposed to be codified in the Zoning Ordinance, under a new subsection of Section 7-700, are those associated with development applications (new market-rate multi-family and senior housing development—continuum of care and independent living facilities) that involve additional density above what was anticipated by the underlying Small Area Plan. The Practical Updates to Section 7-700 will also provide clarifications to existing language regarding levels of affordability, unit types, and equivalency to memorialize existing contribution practices.
- (55) Has the City looked at inclusionary zoning, requiring a percentage of affordable dwelling units with every project of more than 3 units to maximize ADU development EVERYWHERE and so that the City doesn't promote building of apartments that are inappropriately large and tall for existing neighborhoods?** *Response:* The City conducted an initial feasibility analysis of Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) in 2020 parallel to the 2019/2020 Housing Contributions Workgroup process. It was determined that the findings of the analysis should be re-evaluated after the 2020/2021 Contribution Policy Update has been in effect for a minimum of three years so that a comparison of the impact of IZ to that of existing housing tools (including the Policy Update) could be completed.
- (56) Is there a map of existing affordable units within the City?** *Response:* Yes; a map has been uploaded to the Bonus Height webpage of existing affordable units.
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**THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT'S  
REGIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM AND THE CITY'S ZONING FOR HOUSING  
PROGRAM  
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/RESPONSES**

- (57) **The map of likely use [as shown at the April 12 Information Meeting] seems to show a really tiny impact of this change. Was there any consideration to expanding the change to allow more housing units to be generated?** *Response:* The City, with private and non-profit partners along with the community, has worked hard to meet its housing goals. Page 5 of the April 12 presentation shows the significant progress that has been made under the [2014-2025 Housing Master Plan](#) to-date alone. With a goal of “new affordability” in 2,000 units over the 12-year period of the Housing Master Plan, the gap had narrowed to 222 as of December 2021. However, the City is also endeavoring to meet its local target – an additional 2,250 affordable and workforce housing units - under the [Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's \(COG\) Regional Housing Initiative](#) also noted on page 5 of the April 12 presentation. Even incremental increases to bonus height enhances the yield of affordable housing achieved through the development process, at no financial cost to the City.
- (58) **When did the City Council hold a public hearing to join the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) [2020-2030 Regional Housing Initiative](#) (RHI) which led to the Section 7-700 text amendment? Why is P&Z proposing this amendment now and not previously when the City was always at risk for losing affordable housing?** *Response:* City Council approved a resolution to endorse COG's Regional Housing Initiative (RHI), including a target for expanded housing production for Alexandria – both market rate and affordable, at a public hearing on March 14, 2020. The discussion and study, convened by COG, began in 2018 – largely in response to a shared regional concern that the metropolitan area might be less competitive for future economic development/growth if there weren't a sufficient supply of housing affordable at a range of income levels for workers.

Besides the March 14, 2020 public hearing, there were a number of presentations regarding the RHI at Planning Commission and City Council meetings beginning in fall 2019, including the September 3, 2019 Planning Commission public hearing; the September 10, 2019 City Council legislative meeting; the October 2, 2019 City Council legislative meeting (including a revision to the FY 2020 Interdepartmental Long Range Work Plan to incorporate the RHI); an extended discussion during oral reports at the November 26, 2019 City Council legislative meeting; the February 25, 2020 City Council legislative meeting through a discussion of the proposed FY 2021 Interdepartmental Long Range Work Plan; and the March 10, 2020 City Council Legislative Meeting at which City Resolution endorsing the COG RHI was introduced.

Subsequent to Council's action on March 14, 2020, the Department of Planning & Zoning and the Office of Housing were charged by City Council to come up with various land use and regulatory/non-financial tools to help Alexandria reach its expanded housing production targets. With P&Z in the lead, these two departments are working on a number of “Zoning for Housing” initiatives to potentially increase housing yielded through the

development process. So far, the [Accessory Dwelling Unit policy](#) and the [Co-living policy](#) have resulted following study and community engagement. As presented during the meeting you attended, in Phase I of Zoning for Housing the City is reviewing policies that may only incrementally increase housing production and/or which serve to clarify existing policies to conform with City practice.

The other part of this question relates to the City's efforts around preservation of at-risk housing, such as expiring affordability contracts through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The City has made preservation of at-risk housing, along with development of new affordable housing, a priority of its [2014-2025 Housing Master Plan](#) through the application of a variety of tools, including supporting preservation through redevelopment, incremental and comprehensive renovation, and acquisition and repositioning by affordable housing partners.

- (59) What role does Zoning for Housing play?** *Response:* To help meet its local target, under the COG RHI, the City will continue to utilize existing affordability programs while also developing and studying new potential programs, such as those under Zoning for Housing. Zoning for Housing is designed to study and address regulatory barriers to housing production and affordability in further alignment with the City's continuing commitment to equity and access, community vitality, sustainability, and neighborhood design and related character.
- (60) Is it anticipated that all affordable housing programs, including those under Zoning for Housing, will each result in a large number of units?** *Response:* As the City works to expand housing production and affordability under Zoning for Housing and other programs, the City recognizes that some housing initiatives may have smaller yields due to site conditions, zoning and other regulatory factors but there are other City housing programs which could result in medium and/or larger unit yields. As such, all programs will assist the City in addressing multiple goals of increased supply and affordability, as well as geographic dispersion of affordable units and access to amenities, services, and multi-modal transportation options.
- (61) Are there other initiatives coming under Zoning for Housing?** *Response:* Yes; to-date several Zoning for Housing initiatives have been taken through a public review process, including community meetings, and have been approved by the City Council under the initial phase of Zoning for Housing (Phase I - FYs 2021-2022). These include [Accessory Dwelling Units Policy \(January 2021\)](#) and a [Co-living Initiative \(January 2022\)](#). This proposal for a Bonus Height Text Amendment is part of Phase I of Zoning for Housing initiatives. Another current initiative being discussed under Zoning for Housing is Auxiliary Dwellings in Commercial Zones and information regarding it can be found through this link: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/auxiliary-dwellings>

Also, staff are anticipated to bring suggested Zoning for Housing initiatives forward to City Council, following study and community input, over the next several fiscal years.

- (62) **Isn't there a need to talk about density in a wider forum?** *Response:* Thank you for that comment, and it is a suggestion to consider it as part of a potential future visioning process for the City.

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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/RESPONSES**

- (63) **You say that pre-Covid, job growth were out pacing housing production. Do we know if that is still the case?** *Response:* Across Northern Virginia, the housing market saw a continuous decline in housing inventory. As of January 2022, there were just 855 active listings in the entire NOVA region, a 46% decline from January 2021 (though some of this decline is likely due to a variability in seasonal listing activity). While total inventory has been decreasing, affordable inventory has all but disappeared, and the issue of workforce housing has become even more critical. As the region's economy continued to grow in 2021, housing prices grew as well. Residents looking for detached single-family homes will find that 90% of active listings are over \$1 million. As millennial households began forming families, they were initially helped by lower mortgage rates. Those rates began increasing this year, and this economically vital group of young professionals are finding homeownership increasingly out of reach. Further impacting potential first-time homeowners was the rental market, which reported a 14.8% increase in rental rates last year, proving to be even more problematic for lower-income workers. Analysts suggest the new model of hybrid working as a primary reason for housing growth. Some residents are considering moving into larger homes with dedicated office space or leaving the region altogether. With a growing economy, regional employers are trying to meet labor demand by hiring more of these remote workers who have no intention of moving to this region. Employers are also physically relocating offices or creating new satellite offices in locations closer to their employee base. In short, the continued housing price growth may impact the region's economic competitiveness as housing affordability limits available workforce housing options.
- (64) **Does Alexandria have a sense of the health of the commercial building market?** *Response:* Even before the pandemic, demand for office space was falling sharply regionally and nationally. A limited number of new office buildings have been constructed in Alexandria, largely consisting of existing Alexandria employers moving to new buildings within the City. A consequence of limited demand is that existing older office have high vacancy rates.



- (65) **Is there a trend of conversions from commercial to housing?** *Response:* Yes, that is a common trend in the region and in Alexandria especially. A few years ago, the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership conducted a study in collaboration with City staff that showed that conversions are strongly a net positive to the City, even when taking into account the increased cost of providing services to residents (including schools, parks, public safety). The office-to-residential conversion trend, that Alexandria began to see about five years ago continues focuses on older office buildings in need of investment to remain viable.

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## OLD TOWN NORTH SMALL AREA PLAN QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/RESPONSES

- (66) **Does analysis of projected traffic accurately forecast for the impact of last mile delivery? What analysis supports the conclusion that OTN can support twice the density in half the time?** *Response:* You can link to the Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTNSAP) Update here <https://www.alexandriava.gov/Info/basic-page/old-town-north-small-area-plan-2017>. The Transportation Chapter is Chapter 5 and information related to the Transportation Study begins on page 86 of the OTNSAP with information on truck loading and deliveries on page 92 and parking on page 95.
- (67) **How much future growth is anticipated in Old Town North?** *Response:* The redevelopment currently occurring within Old Town North implements the vision established by the [2017 Old Town North Small Area Plan \(OTNSAP\) Update](#). A goal of the land use concept recommended in the OTNSAP was to provide a balanced mix of residents and employees in the area than what historically existed in Old Town North to support local businesses, placemaking, and add vibrancy to the neighborhood. At the time, the OTNSAP estimated an average occupancy for existing non-residential uses in Old Town North of approximately 3.5 employees per 1,000 square feet and residential at approximately 1.5 residents per unit. The OTNSAP recommends two to three times more residential than office square footage to support a more balanced mix. The anticipated and planned development enables a better balance of office and residential uses as shown in Figure 2.02 of the Plan.

The plan projects that +/- 3,000 new dwelling units would be added to the plan area in the next +/- 20 years on the identified redevelopment sites. Dividing the projected growth (3,000 units) by 20 years results in a total of 150 units/year. The OTNSAP projects +/- 750 units for the first five years following adoption (2017-2022). The actual number of new units that have been constructed since 2017 using the OTNSAP recommendations total 540 units.

- (68) In North Old Town Alexandria, we were under the impression that the growing number of high-rise condo buildings going up around us would not exceed the previous building height (i.e., Crown Plaza Hotel), but it appears developers are adding more stories to their new condo bldg. projects than should be allowed. Why is the City of Alexandria allowing these new buildings to exceed what has been the limit, please? Response:** The OTNSAP recommends that the predominant building heights in the plan area be mid-rise (50 - 77 feet) with some taller buildings up to a maximum of 142 feet at limited strategic locations including buildings up to 140 feet on the former power plant site (See Figure 2.14 Heights Map in the OTNSAP). (The existing tower height for the former Crowne Plaza Hotel is 141 feet).

The OTNSAP is clear to acknowledge that the proposed FAR, density, and height recommendations are not inclusive of any density and/or height bonuses that sites may be awarded through the development review process to provide specific public benefits to affordable housing and the arts. While the OTNSAP does not speculate on how these would be utilized for redevelopment sites, it established or strengthened these regulatory incentives in the hopes that they would be utilized to support plan and City-wide goals. Utilization of Section 7-700, which provides bonus density and height for the provision of affordable housing, is generally applicable to sites across the City, provided the sites meet zoning, and other regulatory and non-regulatory factors that make a site feasible. Additionally, the creation and utilization of [Section 6-900](#) of the Zoning Ordinance to support art and cultural uses within the Old Town North Arts District, is a recommendation within the OTNSAP to retain and attract arts and cultural anchors/uses to the area.

- (69) Sorry, but the arts theater is on the bottom floor of the new development taking over the Crown Plaza Hotel. The developers of the Crown Plaza built several floors above the arts theaters, which appears to those of us who live in the area as abusing the building limits of Alexandria. Response:** The density bonus for arts uses in the OTNSAP does not specify where in the building the arts use or the bonus density must be located. The area directly above the theater is additional seating and lobby space.
- (70) Can we agree that developers will be keenly interested in investing in Old Town? The 45/50 foot barrier, does that include the arts bonus? What happens if the arts entity does not thrive? Response:** The Old Town North Arts and Cultural District Overlay, where the arts bonus can be applied is for Old Town North, which covers portions of N. Fairfax, Montgomery, Madison, First, N. Saint Asaph, N. Pitt, N. Royal, Third, and N. Washington Streets and Canal Center. It is true that different arts uses may occupy the arts spaces over time. Much like retail evolves and changes over time with different uses, this will also be the case for the arts spaces. The Zoning Ordinance anticipates this and has a mechanism for handling changes of arts use.

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