Zoning Reform for More Housing Choice and Affordability: Successes and Lessons Learned from Arlington

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The Need for Missing Middle Supply

Arlington’s housing supply has not kept pace with increasing demand, resulting in fewer choices and rising costs.

Source: 2022 Arlington County Profile; Arlington County Affordable Housing Indicators; CPW0 Master Housing Unit Database
53% of Arlington’s residents live in the major planning corridors

47% of Arlington’s residents live outside of major planning corridors

On 78% of the land

Major planning corridors cover 22% of the County’s land area
Single family home on the market in Arlington
Fourplex in San Diego, California
One of the places that managed to roll back these rules is Arlington, Va. Lawmakers voted to allow apartments with as many as six units in residential neighborhoods. But the debate was hardly straightforward.

Groups of longtime homeowners protested the changes and sued over the policy. They worry more housing could overwhelm their single-family neighborhoods.

Still, many economists contend that building a bunch of new homes for middle- and upper-income families — in Arlington or elsewhere — can reduce competition for older homes and keep them more affordable.

Over time, that can make a noticeable impact and do so without using up taxpayer money.