**BACKGROUND:** Proposed Bluemont Civic Association Resolution on the Elimination of Bonus Density Maximums and Bonus Height

On September 13, 2019, Arlington County Planning Staff presented a memo to County Zoning Committee (ZOCO) of the Planning Commission meeting, which proposed to eliminate bonus density maximums and bonus height, and allow the County Board to grant bonus density for additional purposes.

The memo listed the following schedule for bring this resolution to the County Board for final consideration and a vote:

* October 19, 2019: County Board Request to Advertise
* November 4, 2019: Planning Commission for final consideration and recommendation
* November 16, 2019: County Board for final consideration

**What is Bonus Density and Bonus Height?** Under incentive zoning provisions in the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO), the County Board can, when certain findings are made about the proposed development, grant additional bonus density and bonus height above the level indicated on the General Land Use Plan and applicable zoning district standards.

**What are the current caps on Bonus Density and Bonus Height, and for what reasons can the County Board grant additional bonus density and height?** Bonus provisions are explicitly outlined in Section §15.5.9 of the code for affordable housing and community facilities, and limited to an additional height of three to six stories. The maximum combined density increase for affordable housing and community facilities is 25%.

Under a separate provision of the County zoning code (section §15.5.7), the County Board has approved additional density for site plan projects to achieve improvements related to transportation, sustainable development (LEED), and park and open space improvements and other purposes on a project-by-project basis. Bonus density achieved for community improvements in this part of the Zoning Code are not limited by a maximum density cap.

**What did County staff recommend?** After studying this issue, County Planning Staff recommended “Alternative 1” of three alternatives presented in the memo.

**Alternative 1: Eliminate Bonus Density Maximums and Bonus Height Except Where Consistent with Adopted Plans/Policies**“ACZO §15.5 would be amended to expand opportunities to realize additional density for several purposes (i.e., affordable housing, community facilities, open space, transportation improvements, green building design) without a fixed density maximum when the County Board finds that the proposal is in keeping with adopted County plans and policies. Earning additional density would be limited by the maximum building heights defined in the respective zoning districts, except however, under this proposal, the County Board would be enabled to approve taller building heights where additional height is permitted by adopted County Board policy (i.e., area/sector plans, PDSP, etc.). The general ability to achieve additional height in §15.5.9 (up to three stories for community facilities, up to six stories for affordable housing) would be eliminated.

Alternative 1 would also redefine eligible community improvements for bonus density such as those public facilities that may otherwise typically be built by the County including fire/police facilities, libraries, public school facilities, community centers, public transportation facilities and improvements, public open space, community recreation, or health centers. Alternative 1 would incorporate bonus provisions for sustainable green building design consistent with adopted policies and for other priorities or extraordinary unforeseen circumstances. Overall, this Alternative would allow for the achievement of additional density in a balanced method across multiple categories, while contributing towards public improvements and within the height limits set forth in the applicable zoning district.

*General Land Use Plan*:  
The General Land Use Plan would be amended to clarify and expand references to bonus density provisions in the GLUP to allow for broader opportunities to achieve Comprehensive Plan goals and other policies/priorities. “

The full Planning Staff memo is at this link: <https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/09/ZOCO-memo-with-text-september-13-2019.pdf>