



County of Fairfax, Virginia 07-34580

MEMORANDUM

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DEPT. OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

DATE: March 12, 2007

TO: Gerry Connolly
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

FROM: James P. Zook, Director:
Department of Planning and Zoning

SUBJECT: Residential Studio Units/Single Room Occupancy

This is in response to your inquiry regarding the request of the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee to advance the public hearing to April 2007, on an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance that would encourage the production of Residential Studio Units (RSUs) /Single Room Occupancy (SROs) units. Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate the timeframe requested for this amendment. Staff is currently working on a number of housing initiatives that will result in either Comprehensive Plan and/or Zoning Ordinance amendments focusing on "workforce housing" that we envision will have a significant impact on increasing the affordable unit production. In this regard we are working with the Board appointed High-Rise Affordability Panel and have made significant progress coming together on issues of prior disagreement. I anticipate that in the summer 2007 timeframe we will request the Board to advertise Comprehensive Plan and/or Zoning Ordinance amendments to further this effort. Staff will continue to work with the High-Rise Panel on its other suggested amendments beyond those that we intend to bring forward this summer.

Additionally, there are a number of recently adopted and pending amendments that will further housing affordability in other ways within the County. In 2006, the Board adopted an amendment to the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program that extended the term of price control from 15 years for rental developments and 20 years for for-sale developments to a 30 year term, with a renewable term for each resale. That amendment also eliminated the opportunity for rental developments to buy out of the ADU Program after 10 years and it established a provision whereby the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority can purchase any ADU resold during any control period. In such cases, the ADU can be held as affordable in perpetuity. Housing affordability is peripherally addressed by several amendments regarding the opportunity to construct additions to an existing single family dwelling when such addition and/or the existing dwelling does not meet the applicable setback requirements. By allowing residents to make certain upgrades, many speakers at the public meetings on these issues cited the beneficial affordability factors related to remaining in a current residence. A pending amendment to the ADU Program regarding the timing of

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issuance of building permits and Residential Use Permits is scheduled for Board public hearing on March 26, 2007, and will facilitate faster delivery of units in ADU developments. Other ADU Program and housing affordability amendments to be considered this year involve issues dealing with the term for for-sale ADUs; for-sale pricing schedules; income eligibility; ADU independent living facilities and the required bedroom mix; and the parking requirements for ADUs and workforce housing units.

Because staff fully understands and wants to be responsive to the pursuit of RSUs/SROs and the role these units may play in achieving an end to homelessness, discussions have been initiated with interest groups pursuing RSUs/SROs. We had our initial meeting with RSU/SRO advocates on January 26th of this year and are currently gathering additional information. We have committed to work with these groups over the next several months and to bring a proposal forward to the Board on this issue in the December/January timeframe for authorization.

In April we will bring forward to the Board the Zoning Ordinance Amendment Work Program for the next fiscal year. As noted above, a number of affordable housing initiatives are included for consideration in addition to the RSU/SRO proposal. At that time, we will recommend a priority order of the many affordable housing initiatives based upon value added and degree of support for implementation, among other factors.

We appreciate the Board's leadership in identifying affordable housing as one of its priorities and want you to know that we are much aligned with the quest for affordable housing and other priorities of the Board. Please let me know if I can provide additional information. Thank You

JPZ/EMM

cc: Board of Supervisors
James Scott, Virginia State Delegate
Conrad Egan, Co-Chairman, Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
Anthony Griffin, County Executive
Verdia Haywood, Deputy County Executive
Paula Sampson, Director, HCD
Eileen M. McLane, Zoning Administrator
Pam Gannon, Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board