

January 22, 2020

Chairman Jeff McKay

12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 530

Fairfax, VA 2203

Re: zMOD Recommendations

Dear Chairman McKay and Members of the Board,

The Young Adults Advisory Council has had the pleasure to review Fairfax County's Zoning Ordinance Modernization project ("zMOD") recommendations that will be heard on the 28th of January. Being the appointed body tasked with advising the Fairfax County Government on economic initiatives impacting young adult experiences in the County, we broadly support the proposed modifications and highlight the below recommendations.

1. Accessory Living Units

The Young Adult Advisory Council supports the modifications proposed regarding Accessory Living units. In recognizing the lack of affordable housing throughout the County, the Council strives to find ways in which young adults can access housing and house ownership. A way in which we can equalize the housing market and provide an economic option is to allow greater access to accessory living units. Allowing these structures not only provides an alternative source of income for a homeowner, but also would allow them to properly host family members of varying abilities and economic stature.

We kindly ask that the Board adopt the recommended administrative permit process for accessory living units to reduce any delay in a person modifying their home and to avoid any conscious or unconscious bias that may occur through discretionary hearing processes.

We urge the Board to remove the current requirement that someone on the property, either in the principal dwelling or accessory living unit be at least 55 years of age or a person with a disability. This bias towards age and disability only limits a young person's ability to support themselves and their families and remains blind to modern-day changes to the family unit. The idea of a nuclear family is becoming less of a norm and the presence of homes with extended family members continues to grow. Having both an age and disability restriction on accessory living units bars young people and diverse communities from choosing their family structure and living environment. Also, having an age restriction on whether one can access this option enforces the idea that young people are less than and are not in need of the same economic options as their older community members.

We acknowledge that accessory living units will provide affordable forms of housing for residents of Fairfax County. We understand accessory living units are not a type of committed affordable housing, however, due to their affordable rents they will likely become a competitor

for residents looking for more financially comfortable housing options. This form of accessory living will appeal to a large demographic of residents, including Fairfax County's vibrant and thriving immigrant community. Members of this community work, play, and live in our community but are currently not protected under the current Fairfax County Fair Housing Act. The Young Adults Advisory Council recommends that the Board review the Fairfax County Fair Housing Act to include under the clauses of protected statuses - immigration/ legal status. This will ensure that our immigrant residents are not denied housing on the premise of their immigration/ legal status (visas, TPS, DACA, undocumented, etc.) and provides the county with an opportunity to reevaluate our existing structures and policy's while renewing our commitment to our immigrant neighbors.

2. Home-based Businesses

We urge the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to support the proposed modifications regarding home-based businesses. The proposed modifications open the possibility for our County's ever-growing population to use their home as a headquarters for their niche business. As we know, real estate in Fairfax County comes at great expense and is often inaccessible to those who are just starting a business. Allowing for our County residents to use their homes as a place to either start and/or sustain their business brings about great economic opportunity to our community. Expanding the types of permitted home-based businesses allows for our residents to be innovative and pair their personal talents and skills with the needs of their immediate community without having to face the financial hardships and deterrents of locating a storefront. This is especially pertinent given the current COVID-19 crisis where millions have lost their jobs and may be reliant on home-based businesses - current or future - for their income.

Additionally, when considering limits on customers in one's home, we ask the Board to opt for the advertised option of a maximum of 4 at a time and 8 in a given day. Though we think these numbers are still too low, we recognize that opting for a reduced number bars many business structures (i.e. classes, community healing groups, therapy groups, tutoring businesses) from success and potentially bars them from financial sustainability. We also support the maximum options because, should home-based businesses be present in both the principal unit and accessory living unit, all businesses would be restricted to the total maximum number (as opposed to each individual business). Therefore, it is even more important to adopt the maximum numbers of 4 and 8 to provide all businesses the opportunity to flourish. Small home-based businesses are growing throughout our nation and we should be supporting innovation and personal growth of our residents, not squash them.

3. Other Items of Support

The Young Adult Advisory Council stands in solidarity with County efforts to increase resident's access to solar panels and alternatives to fossil-fuels, thus we ask that you approve the electric vehicle and solar panel modification proposals. Additionally, in recognizing the movement toward innovative and new home and community designs, we stand in support of the new classification of Stacked Townhouse Dwellings. Also, in recognizing the power of history can have one's sense of and investment in community, we support the proposed Alternative Use of

Historic Buildings use. We hope that rehabilitating and modernizing historic buildings throughout the County will help build a new, interconnected community which will attract younger people. And, to keep one's sense of community thriving in Fairfax County and to bring more attractions and culture to our area, we support the proposed food truck language. We would like to see these businesses on wheels become known entities in our own backyards. Finally, in recognizing that younger residents of the County are seeking a place where they can live, work and play, we urge the Board to support the proposal regarding Indoor Commercial and Outdoor Commercial Recreation use types.

Request for Future Study:

As the Board continues to review existing policies and code-sections, we urge the Board and Planning Commission to do a specific and more thorough analysis on Accessory Living Units. As a Council, we see the requirement of having a single-family detached dwelling with two acres as unrealistic and out of touch with the future of housing in Fairfax County. The total amount of homes with two acres of land are quickly disappearing and set further financial and economic barriers to affordable housing. One's ability to either expand their personal financial stature, or host a family member or loved one who is not 55+ or disabled should not be dependent on their lot size. Additionally, with the future of planned living environments and developments diverging from the single detached home model, we urge the Board and Planning Commission to study and develop ways in which accessory living unit options can be accessed by owners of townhomes and other home structures.

We, as the Young Adults Advisory Council, recognize that any quarrels with the modification proposals regarding home-based (i.e. accessory living units and home-based businesses) modifications can be mediated by one's home owners or condo association. Home and condo associations can modify their covenants and/or bylaws to bar the aforementioned home modifications. Thus, we ask the Board to kindly adopt these options and allow individual associations to rely on the direct needs and wants of their neighbors in forming any further restrictions.

As Fairfax County continues to grow, develop and attract new and younger residents, we hope that the Board can continue to elevate the voices of Young Adults and further policies and provisions which meet their unique needs and hopes for their community.

Sincerely,

Denver Supinger, Chair

Cc: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Fairfax County Planning Commission

Bryan J. Hill, County Executive

Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive

Leslie Johnson, Zoning Administrator