

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Mayor and Town Council

From: Kelly O'Brien, AICP, CZA, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning
David Levy, AICP, Director of Planning and Zoning

Date: August 23, 2024

Re: Summary of Town Council Discussions To Date on Housing Diversity

Cc: Mercury Payton, Town Manager; David Levy, AICP, Director of Planning and Zoning

On May 6, 2024, David Levy, Director of Planning and Zoning, gave a brief presentation on different types of housing diversity that exist, including data and information intended to inform and assist the Town Council discussion. Council members provided initial thoughts from the presentation that evening and asked the Town Manager to schedule a continuation of the discussion at the work session on May 13, 2024. Mr. Levy was not able to attend that discussion, but Kelly O'Brien, Deputy Director of Planning and Zoning, was the staff lead that evening.

The Council discussed the following topics related to housing diversity.

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) – Several Council members mentioned the 2024 State legislation that was introduced, but not approved, to require jurisdictions to permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs). At present, Vienna does not allow there to be ADUs. Early in the multi-year project to update the zoning code (Code Create Vienna), the Town Council held a discussion on the topic, including whether the Town should consider allowing, but regulating, ADUs. As part of a community survey regarding the broader zoning code, survey questions were included to gauge the community's preferences. The survey did indicate some willingness, even desire, to allow some versions of ADUs, but the Town Council decided to delay a broader discussion until after Code Create Vienna was completed. On May 13, 2024, the Town Council indicated that a future work session would offer the opportunity to look at the community feedback that was collected and the State legislation that was proposed to discuss advantages and disadvantages of allowing, yet regulating, ADUs in Vienna.

- Fairfax County programs – The Council asked about programs and assistance that Fairfax County offers and if such programs can be used to help Vienna residents. Staff will research Fairfax County programs and return to Council with more information.
- Comprehensive Plan – The Council members mentioned housing as a topic that will be discussed as part of the comprehensive plan update, and looks forward to recommendations for the plan from the Planning Commission. Comments from Council members included a willingness to consider flexibility in zoning and the comprehensive plan for housing as it relates to some areas in Town. Council members asked staff if they could identify vacant office buildings that could potentially be redeveloped to include a housing element.
- Transition and Neighborhood Mixed Use zones – As part of the flexibility discussion in the previous bullet, Council asked if Transition zones could be an option for additional housing if they redevelop. Councilmember Anderson mentioned Economic Development concerns with allowing all office spaces to convert to residential and losing office space. The Council also mentioned the recently added Neighborhood Mixed Use zone and how that could be used in appropriate locations to allow mixed-use with upper-story residential, without being detrimental to the character of existing neighborhoods. No specific locations were discussed at the meeting.
- Work Force Housing – Housing subsidies for Town employees and such similar positions as teachers and fire fighters were discussed, with the intent of making it easier for Vienna’s public servants to live near where they work. There was concern about where the funding would come from, how the selection process would be administered, the criteria that would be used, and whether the Town could legally limit such a process to Town staff. The majority of the Council was not in favor of pursuing a program of this nature at this time.
- Housing Subsidies – Programs to subsidize housing costs for other groups beyond the workforce were discussed, including for seniors and low-income families. Similar concerns were raised for these types of programs as the concerns raised for Work Force Housing -- the source(s) of funding, program administration, selection criteria, and how it would be different than programs that Fairfax County currently provides. The majority of the Council was not in favor of pursuing any programs of this nature at this time.
- Working with builders – One suggestion was that the builders who are developing multiple housing units could be asked to provide affordable units in their developments. One approach would be for the developers to include the affordable units in the proffers for rezoning applications. If the Town were to wish to have such an approach, it

would be ideal for the Town to have an affordable housing policy that applicants could follow when they are preparing their rezoning applications and associated proffers. Single family housing does not require proffers usually so there is no trigger for requiring affordable prices for these units. The majority of the Council was not in favor of pursuing a program of this nature at this time.

For the September 9, 2024, work session on Accessory Dwelling/Living Units, staff has provided additional information on that topic. Additional information discussed above will be provided as the Town Council requests or as the Council schedules discussions to address additional topics.