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Subject: Review - Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance (AfDU) Draft

Thank you for an opportunity to provide comments on the draft Affordable Dwelling Unit (AfDU) Ordinance. ***On behalf of PWC VOICE, our chief concern is that the current draft does not apply to re-zonings, which we believe is a missed opportunity to gain additional voluntary affordable dwelling units in the county.*** It is important to include all applications in this program in order to get maximum benefit and number of affordable units through this voluntary AfDU program. Any affordable dwelling unit development that involves an application for rezoning should be eligible for incentives. While the **Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan** outlines broad policy guidance for projects proposing affordable housing, we believe an actual ordinance for by-right and re-zonings would provide clarity to the development partners, as well as ease the administrative burden on County staff. The AfDU Ordinance is stronger than the Comprehensive Plan and will be more effective in hitting the affordable housing goals of the county.

Comments:

Definitions: “Affordable Dwelling Unit” should reference the Metropolitan Statistical Area’s AMI. This will ensure compatibility with other state and federal housing programs that use the same HUD AMIs.

Eligibility: AfDU developments subject to applications for special use permits, also need to be **eligible for the incentives.** It is important to include all applications in this program in order to get maximum benefit and number of affordable units through this voluntary AfDU program in Prince William County. This language is used in the **Housing Chapter of the Comp Plan:** *“One tool for implementing the Housing Chapter vision is the adoption of an Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance designed to holistically meet the needs of the County for mixed income communities with housing opportunities across all cost bands. The development of an AfDU ordinance is included as an action strategy in this chapter. An adopted AfDU Ordinance would provide developers, during a rezoning process or through the site plan process opportunities, under the specified guidelines, to voluntarily provide affordable housing.”*

Density Bonus Wording: Current AfDU wording implies you cannot get the full (100%) density bonus. Prince William County housing targets are lagging behind other jurisdictions. The only pathway to obtain affordable housing has been through the re-zoning proffer process. A more comprehensive AfDU Ordinance which includes by-right and re-zonings will yield more low-to-no cost affordable housing units for the County.

Control Period Wording: AfDU control period standard should be longer. A control period of not less than 30 years is a best practice. 15 years is not long enough and the short time frame really limits the affordable housing supply once these units move out of the control period. Shared equity policies can be developed to help first-time homebuyers build equity and still allow for future buyers to access lower home prices. We support creating a long-term solution to this issue by including wording in the AfDU that the density bonus will be granted only for projects where units must stay affordable for 40 years.

Application Submittal Requirements: The processing time period for density Bonus Applications of 280 days is too long. This excessive length of time discourages developers from applying for a density bonus. The period should be a maximum of 180 days.

Voluntary vs. Mandatory – Since the ordinance will be voluntary, more incentives are needed for people to utilize the program. Loudoun is doing this for 100% of their affordable projects. We should consider this at a lower threshold for projects that include units at a certain AMI's

Decision Process Transparency: The process for requesting density increases on by-right parcels of land should be as transparent as possible. Comprehensive Plan amendments, rezonings and Special Use Permits require public hearings. Extra density based on affordable housing proffers should be discussed/authorized using these same public processes.

Questions:

- 1. Under this ordinance is it permissible to build affordable rental units in lieu of affordable for-sale units?**
- 2. Can a market-rate developer provide cash-in-lieu of building affordable units?**

Additional request: Review of administrative guidelines - The Housing Department will be involved in drafting the administrative guidelines. These guidelines will form the substantive part of the final approved ordinance. We believe having an opportunity to review and comment on this document is an important part of our partnership to bring more accessible affordable housing to the residents of Prince William County.

Sincerely,

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