

Dear Members of Town Meeting,

When I talk to residents of Arlington, the most common concern I hear is about housing costs. People want to stay in Arlington, to continue to be a part of our neighborhoods, but costs keep increasing. Many of those housing-burdened in Arlington aren't eligible for subsidized Affordable housing, and even for those who are, long waiting lists make it hard for those who are eligible to benefit in practice.

Article 38 won't solve all our housing problems. But it's a step in the right direction that would make a real positive difference for Arlington families.

Today, large detached single-family homes of any size are permitted throughout Arlington, but the exact same building with the same exterior appearance but divided to allow two families to live in the building is banned in the majority of our town, not even being permitted with a special permit. If we do nothing, that won't preserve our current smaller homes. With our current zoning rules, they'll keep gradually getting replaced with very large multi-million-dollar homes. We need other options, and Article 38 creates one new option that can allow for positive change.

Article 38's size limitations on units ensure that homes created under Article 38 will be smaller and less expensive than the large single-detached homes we're seeing built today, and in many cases will mean that Article 38 construction will have a smaller footprint than a single-family home that would be built without Article 38, preserving more green space and leading to fewer trees getting cut down. In addition, construction under Article 38 would be required to comply with our newly-strengthened tree bylaw and other protections to ensure that they will be a positive part of our neighborhoods. The Newton amendment makes it even stronger by preserving this size requirement without unnecessarily burdening future homeowners.

Where I grew up, whether a home was a single-detached home or a two-family home wasn't something you could easily tell from the outside. Two-family homes were a strong part of residential neighborhoods, allowing people of different economic backgrounds to live side by side, go to the same schools, and get to know each other as neighbors. And Arlington knows this can work, as many places in town we have two-family homes in single-family areas that predate our current zoning. Arlington has the opportunity to allow a greater variety of housing sizes and types in our neighborhoods again, and the size protections in Article 38 will ensure that the units created are not excessively large.

When I walk through Arlington, I see "you are welcome here" signs and similar positive indications of our desire to be a welcoming community. But if we want to welcome diverse populations into our town, including the people now graduating from AHS who may want to return and raise their own families here, we need to make it legal to provide places for them to live. Article 38 has the power to help make that more of a reality by creating a greater diversity in housing size and costs throughout Arlington and ensuring we're not only creating housing for rich people in most of our neighborhoods. Article 38 will build Arlington's future "starter homes", the ones we are losing now.

I hope you join me in supporting both the Newton amendment and the main motion and strengthening our ability to make Arlington welcoming for everyone.

Sincerely,  
~Xavid Pretzer  
TMM Precinct 17