

<https://greenstreetsarlington.org>

Supporting MBTA Communities zoning with climate resilience and natural spaces

To: MBTA Communities Working Group

July 17, 2023

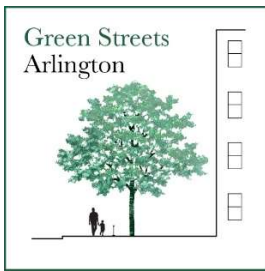
RE: MBTA Communities Districts zoning recommendations

Please see attached comments, presented today by the steering committee of Green Streets Arlington in discussion with David Morgan, Claire Ricker, Sonjay Newton, and Steve Revilak.

Thank you for your time and work,

Mary Ellen Aronow (TMM 8), Elisabeth Carr-Jones (TMM 14), Alan Jones (TMM 14), Brian McBride, Susan Stamps (TMM 3)

Steering Committee, Green Streets Arlington



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Supporting MBTA Communities zoning with climate resilience and natural spaces

To: MBTA Communities Working Group

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RE: MBTA Communities Districts zoning recommendations

Green Streets Arlington recommends enhancing the zoning laws for MBTA Communities Districts to include provisions to help mitigate climate change, moderate heat islands, enrich Arlington's natural streetscapes, preserve, and increase the tree canopy, provide accessible open spaces, and ensure that our new neighbors can live among a green urban environment which we all enjoy.

Green Streets Arlington recommends ample minimum setback requirements consistent with existing streetscapes, the use of incentives for additional green and public spaces, a required tree canopy in outdoor parking lots, using native plants to support wildlife and pollinators, and adherence to Arlington's Article 16 Tree Preservation and Protection general bylaw. Please see details, page 2.

Arlington citizens have consistently given high priority to green, open space, and a healthy tree canopy. These goals are reflected in Arlington bylaws and planning documents:

Arlington's Action Plan for MBTA Communities (section 3.2 Non-Housing Characteristics) "preserving and expanding the Town's street tree canopy";

Arlington's Master Plan (article 4. The Environment) "Recognizing the fragility of our natural resources, we must ensure that Arlington's residential areas, commercial centers, and infrastructure are developed in harmony with environmental concerns.

Envision Arlington Town goals: "Recognizing the fragility of our natural resources, we must ensure that Arlington's residential areas, commercial centers, and infrastructures are developed in harmony with environmental concerns." We will be known for our commitment to the preservation of Arlington's beauty, limited open space and resources, as well as our place in the regional and global community."

Arlington Housing Production Plan (5 year plan): "Make equitable access to shared green spaces and a healthy living environment a priority for sitinghomes"

Arlington's Tree Protection and Preservation bylaw (Title V, article 16) "preservation of the tree canopy and planting of replacement trees is essential to preserving the character and aesthetic appearance of the Town and maintaining quality of life and the environment in the Town":

Arlington Net Zero Action Plan: "Community and stakeholder input was consistent: by an overwhelming majority, respondents view climate change as a serious crisis (July 2020 survey, 87 percent of respondents rated climate change as "Extremely Important" to them personally)." "..... Support was strong for building efficiency and electrification measures, for making walking, biking, and public transit more attractive, for planting more trees, and for greening Arlington's electricity supply" Net Zero Buildings High Priority Measures: NB13: Promote the planting of trees on private property.

Green Street Arlington recommend the following concepts be included in the zoning laws for MBTA Communities Districts:

1. Minimum setback requirements with green space. We recommend at least 20 feet of landscaped front setback for all new construction in the overlay districts. Mixed-use buildings may be allowed reduced front setback, if and only if there is adequate space for public street shade trees, as determined by the Tree Warden.
2. Incentives for additional green and public space. We recommend adding incentives, such as approval for additional building height, if providing: Landscaped front setbacks larger than required, including additional shade trees; deeded access to publicly accessible “pocket parks”; decreased outdoor paved parking spaces, such as by including structured parking within the building footprint
3. Trees included in outdoor parking lots. We recommend that new outdoor parking lots require 50% coverage of tree canopy within 10 years of establishment to reduce urban heat islands.
4. Use of native trees, shrubs, and perennials within planted areas in order to support native wildlife and pollinators.
5. The existing Tree Protection and Preservation Bylaw in Title V, Article 26 of Arlington’s general bylaws is applicable to MBTA Communities Districts.
6. Require street trees be planted, if not already in place, every 25 feet along the sidewalk in front of new developments or along the front setback of the development if there is not sufficient room on the sidewalk. In essence, extend the existing zoning bylaw re: public trees in industrial and commercial (6.3) to MBTA-C and all Town zoning.

Available tools for siting MBTA Communities Districts should include overlays of Arlington’s street tree inventory, inclusive of available and unavailable public planting spaces, Arlington’s heat island maps, and satellite views of Arlington’s urban tree canopy.

Green Streets Arlington believes residents in the town’s new MBTA Communities Districts deserve the same natural environment that current residents in Arlington desire: shade trees, open spaces, and a safe, pleasant, walkable accessible streetscape.

Sincerely,

Mary Ellen Aronow (TMM 8), Elisabeth Carr-Jones (TMM 14), Alan Jones (TMM 14), Brian McBride, Susan Stamps (TMM 3)

Steering Committee, Green Streets Arlington