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# Missing Middle: NIMBY Reactions in Arlington,

Virginia

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## ABSTRACT

The United States housing market is currently characterized by an affordability crisis associated with persistent shortages across multiple price points. The phrase “Missing Middle” refers to a zoning approach that permits the construction of mid-sized housing types within areas originally reserved for single-family development. This paper draws from the existing literature on “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) reactions to housing development to identify the types of NIMBY sentiments that drove the opposition to Missing Middle in Arlington, Virginia. Drawing on Arlington’s public feedback data, this context dependent qualitative study finds that the majority of public comments reflect concerns about the potential impacts of increased housing density on daily residential life. These findings are aligned with existing literature linking proximity to housing development with adjacent-use NIMBY sentiments. By upzoning all single-family districts, Missing Middle may attract disproportionate adjacent-use sentiment. The findings suggest that, in contexts of stronger local opposition, policymakers may consider more piecemeal rezoning approaches to more effectively assess and respond to local opposition.

<https://doi.org/10.4079/pp.v33i0.12>



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express his gratitude to Professor Hilary Silver for all her support in developing this article. The author sincerely thanks Professor Leah Brooks, Associate Editor Mucahid Aykut, Editor-in-Chief Naomi Atughonu, and Managing Editor Christian Schamberger for their invaluable feedback throughout the editorial process.

## 1. Introduction

The United States currently faces a housing affordability crisis. Scholars interpret the crisis in different ways. One interpretation is that the undersupply of market-rate housing contributes to increasing housing prices and decreasing affordability (Manville et al. 2022). In 2024, the housing shortage in the United States was estimated at around four million housing units (Khater et al. 2024). In 2024, approximately 43 million households, or 33 percent of all United States households, were cost burdened, having spent 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs (USAFACTS 2024).

The construction of new and denser market-rate units addresses the housing shortage and helps increase overall affordability. New units contribute to affordability to the extent that older units age and become more affordable, a process known as price filtering. Critics argue that housing is attached to a scarce and costly resource (land) and the housing market is too fragmented (Been et al. 2019, 27-28). Simply constructing new market-rate units may not make housing more affordable (Buchholz et al. 2026). The affordability crisis is a function of the geographic clustering of high-wage jobs and high-skilled workers, not necessarily from shortages of housing supply (Rodríguez-Pose and Storper 2020).

This paper adopts the understanding that new, denser market-rate units contribute to affordability and that land-use regulations are tools to unlock new housing developments. Loosening zoning regulations is one such tool. The county of Arlington, Virginia, is currently trying to rezone its single-family districts to allow for the construction of mid-sized housing, including duplexes, triplexes, and other multifamily housing units. The rezoning policy is formally named the Expanded Housing Option (EHO) and is commonly referred to as “Missing Middle.” However, residents are opposing the plan to develop new units and increase housing density in single-family districts.

Local opposition to housing development is a phenomenon widely known as “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY). NIMBYism refers to residents’ rejection of “locally unwanted land uses” (Teresa 2021, 308). These locally unwanted land uses range from the construction of waste facilities, homeless shelters, and prisons to housing units (Schively 2007, 256; Pendall 1999, 113). This paper contextualizes Arlington’s plan to develop mid-sized housing within existing NIMBY frameworks. Pendall (1999) suggests that proximity to single-family homes increases NIMBY sentiments, meaning the closer the housing development is to single-family homes, the stronger the NIMBY sentiment.

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Pendall also distinguishes two sentiment types: adjacent-use (“complaints about what is planned for someone’s backyard”) and general anti-growth (121). Adjacent-use sentiment is more likely to predict NIMBY controversy, such as petitions, letters, public testimonies, and lawsuits (118). Pendall also posits that NIMBYism increases depending on housing density; the denser the project, the greater the NIMBY sentiment (127).

This paper hypothesizes that the simultaneous rezoning of all single-family districts—75 percent of all residential districts in Arlington—may increase the residents’ negative sentiments towards mid-sized housing. In this sense, Arlington’s EHO is likely to attract more adjacent-use sentiment than general anti-growth sentiment. When all districts are rezoned at the same time, all single-family households become potential neighbors to denser housing units, increasing adjacent-use sentiment and NIMBY controversy. This paper advances the existing NIMBY framework by examining the specific characteristics of local opposition to a Missing Middle policy based on Arlington’s extensive data on public reactions to the EHO. The research question guiding this study is: “Are NIMBY reactions to EHO in Arlington mostly driven by adjacent-use NIMBY sentiment or general anti-growth sentiment?” To answer the question, this study applies a qualitative case study design to analyze public reactions to Arlington’s EHO.

This paper proceeds in five parts. Part 2 presents an overview of Arlington’s rezoning plans. Part 3 reviews the literature on NIMBYism and Missing Middle, beginning by reviewing the literature on the general characteristics of NIMBYism and then linking them to more recent studies on mid-sized housing. Part 4 explains the methodology, data, and methods used in the research. Part 5 presents the findings. Part 6 concludes with a discussion of the policy implications of NIMBY reactions to the Missing Middle in Arlington.

## 2. Missing Middle in Arlington

Arlington is widely regarded as a politically progressive county and, with a population of 240,900, is the second densest municipality in the State of Virginia, just after Alexandria City (Arlington 2026b; Arlington 2026c; Arlington 2024a; World Population Review 2026). Sixty-three percent of the county’s population lives in transit corridors, which are four times denser than non-corridor areas (Arlington 2024a). The densification of Arlington is a direct result of the transit-oriented rezoning policy started in the 1970s which allowed denser housing development in commercial areas along underground railways next to transit corridors (Hamilton 2023a; Sisson 2023). Evidence suggests that it is politically easier to build denser units in commercial areas, probably

because fewer neighbors oppose development in mixed-use areas (Brooks and Schuetz 2023). In principle, progressive orientation and high density might be expected to correlate with greater public support for rezoning-based housing densification, although existing research suggests that such support is often conditional and context-dependent (Lewis and Baldassare 2010; Wicki et al. 2025).

In 2024, 71 percent of the county’s housing stock consisted of multifamily units and, while 23 percent were detached homes (Arlington 2024b). On the other hand, 75 percent of residential area was exclusively zoned for single-family housing (Arlington 2024c). It is in these residential areas that Arlington intends to develop denser housing, and where local opposition is stronger.

In 2020, Arlington initiated a study to rezone single-family districts. In March 2023, the Arlington County Board adopted the EHO as part of the Affordable Housing Master Plan (Arlington 2024d; ArlingtonWINS 2023). The rezoning—including as section 10.4 of Arlington’s Zoning Ordinance—allows for the construction of duplexes, semidetached homes (two units), triplexes, townhouses (three in a row), and multifamily homes (up to six units), all in previously exclusive single-family zoning districts (Arlington 2024e). The mid-sized housing units must be constructed in single-family lots.

In April 2023, one month after the EHO’s approval, residents filed a lawsuit against the county to stop Missing Middle (ArlingtonWINS 2024). Lawsuits against housing development are considered NIMBY reactions (Iglesias 2002). In September 2024, a Circuit Court judge overturned the EHO zoning amendments, arguing that (i) the county had not adequately considered the impacts of the EHO on privately owned sewer laterals and (ii) the EHO could not be established by right; that is, as a right to construct not subject to exceptional requirements (Armus 2024). In November 2024, the Arlington Board appealed the decision against EHO (Arlington 2024f). Meanwhile, developers already holding a total of 45 EHO permits, which were issued prior to the lawsuit, face legal uncertainty about whether their projects will ultimately be allowed (ArlingtonWINS 2024).

Arlington is one of twenty municipalities in the United States to allow for the construction of mid-sized housing in all single-family districts, and it is the first municipality in the DMV area to do so (Armus 2024). The strategy is also known as “mass upzoning” (Kim 2024, 246). Other municipalities that attempted to rezone all single-family zones for the development of mid-sized housing also encountered legal challenges, including Alexandria City, Montgomery County, and Minneapolis (Armus 2024; Brune 2024; Bixby 2025; Du 2024). Since the

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Missing Middle is a relatively new policy, the literature remains limited on the characteristics of NIMBY reactions to mid-sized housing solutions.

Middle Missing in Arlington is expected to connect low and high-density areas, enhance neighborhood walkability, increase urban densities, foster neighborhood commerce and mass transit, and support housing diversity and inclusion. Mid-sized housing can appeal to young adults, older adults, growing families, and public servants, such as police officers and teachers (Arlington 2024c). For these reasons, Missing Middle is an inclusionary housing policy. Residents who are critical of the policy rely on NIMBY arguments, such as public infrastructure overload and environmental concerns, and argue that the development of mid-sized housing does not necessarily address the problem of housing affordability (Lyon Park Citizens Association 2022).

## 3. Literature Review

### *3.1. Conceptualizing NIMBYism*

The term NIMBY originated in the 1970s to describe “active, vocal, and connected residents who protest against new development proposals in their area (in particular mid-rise and high-rise apartment buildings)” (McNee and Pojani 2022, 555). In the 1970s, urban planning in the United States became more inclusive, allowing citizens to participate in efforts to preserve their neighborhoods (Fainstein 2000).

Homeowners have a disproportional influence over political processes at the municipal level; as “homevoters,” they have enough political power to leverage local democratic mechanisms to advance their interests and deter housing development (Einstein et al 2020; Fischel 2001, ix; Nguyen et al 2013).

NIMBYism manifests through various forms of resistance, encompassing both formal and informal models of protests. Residents may organize demonstrations at the proposed development site or voice their objections during local public hearings (Sally and Tighe 2015, 759). Moreover, residents and homeowner associations may initiate legal action to prevent construction (Iglesias 2002). Homeowners who oppose housing development argue that the development of more affordable housing changes the character of their neighborhoods by attracting lower-income households to live in denser units. The densification strains municipal budgets and undermines the quality of local public services (Wassmer and Wahid 2019, 343-44).

Common NIMBY arguments against housing include overcrowded public schools, increased traffic, and reduced parking and open spaces (Scally and Tighe 2015, 758; McNee and Pojani 2022, 555). According to this perspective, higher-density housing projects are believed to depress surrounding property values and impose costs on neighbors. Residents use zoning regulations as insurance against negative changes to their neighborhoods and should be compensated if the changes materialize (Fischel 2001; Foster and Warren 2022; Wassmer and Wahid 2019). In contrast, anti-NIMBY—or “Yes In My Backyard” (YIMBY)—proponents argue that denser housing development potentially reduces traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, preserves agricultural land, increases walkability, and promotes social, racial, and economic diversity (Doberstein et al 2016, 278; Holleran 2021, 856; Scally and Koenig 2012). In this sense, the creation of more compact housing units provides “public goods” to the population (Schively 2007, 257).

One of the main consequences of NIMBYism is the relocation of higher-density housing projects to lower-income neighborhoods, where homeowners are less likely to politically oppose the developments (Schively 2007). The development of denser housing in poorer areas prevents the deconcentration of poverty and perpetuates racial and economic segregation (Scally and Koenig 2012). Homeowners who oppose higher-density housing typically constitute a relatively homogeneous group of older, white, and wealthier residents (Einstein et al 2020; Whittemore and BenDor 2019). This demographic forms the primary “voice” of NIMBYism and often dominates public hearings and planning meetings (McNee and Pojani 2022). Conversely, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and lower-income individuals remain underrepresented in local decision-making processes concerning housing development (Nguyen et al 2013; Scally and Tighe 2015).

The literature on the relationship between political ideology and views on housing development shows mixed results. Lewis and Baldassare (2010) link progressive ideology to support for denser development, while Wong (2018) finds that progressives are more likely to support mixed-income housing than luxury developments. Whittemore and BenDor (2019) conclude that lifestyle concerns normally associated with progressive values (such as walkability and bikeability) predict openness to housing development more strongly than concerns associated with conservative values. On the other hand, Marble and Nall (2021) find that homeownership and self-interest are better predictors of attitudes towards new housing than ideology (1761). The NIMBY literature also associates proximity to denser housing developments with local opposition to the projects (Pendall 1999; Wicki et al. 2022). This paper draws from the proximity framework to examine the contours of the local opposition to the EHO.

### ***3.2. The Missing Middle***

Missing Middle is a relatively recent concept that refers to “a range of multiunit or clustered housing types, compatible in scale with single-family homes, that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living, respond to shifting household demographics, and meet the need for more housing choices at different price point” (Parolek 2020, 7-8). These housing types are “missing” because the United States has built very few of them in the past three to four decades (Parolek 2020). Permitting for the construction of two to four-unit housing has declined from 9 percent of all housing permits in the 1980s to 3 percent in 2015 (Kuhlmann and Rodnyansky 2024, 158).

The development of higher-density housing within lower-density districts can occur in multiple ways. It may proceed incrementally on a lot-by-lot basis through “zoning fixers,” such as variances and special exceptions, or more comprehensively through zoning reforms, such as the amending municipal comprehensive plans and the remapping of zoning districts (Hills and Schleicher 2015).

Missing Middle represents a form of mass upzoning strategy (i.e., a zoning reform) that eliminates the exclusivity of single-family zoning. Missing Middle functions as an inclusionary housing policy that promotes housing diversity, increases affordability (Zeebuyth and Moore 2024), and reduces inequality in access to housing (Kim 2024, 248-49). Missing Middle policies add housing price points to a development pattern currently “bifurcated” between the “tall and sprawl,” that is, between higher apartment buildings and single-family homes (Parolek 2020; Kuhlmann and Rodnyansky 2024, 158; Haines and Aird 2018, 2).

Missing Middle policies tend to be more politically feasible than the construction of affordable apartment buildings (Zeebuyth and Moore 2024). These policies reduce political bargaining costs: instead of having to bargain for the development of higher-density housing lot by lot through zoning fixers, municipal authorities promote broad zoning reforms. Missing Middle reduces land competition between mid-sized housing and larger multifamily housing, since only mid-sized housing is allowed within single-family districts (Kuhlmann and Rodnyansky 2024). These policies also reduce information costs for both developers and residents, since the construction of mid-sized housing is done as-of-right, without special requirements. In this way, Missing Middle introduces greater certainty to land use (Hills and Schleicher 2015).

Jun and Musso (2013) describe the “relationship between income and land use attention” as “U-shaped,” meaning that higher and lower-income groups tend to pay more attention to land-use policies than middle-income groups (80). Missing Middle is designed to enable the construction of mid-sized housing rather than explicitly affordable housing. In this sense, single-family households might stay more attentive to Missing Middle policies than the targeted middle-income group.

What the Missing Middle literature has not yet addressed is the potential implications of mass upzoning strategies on residents’ sentiments towards housing development. This paper contributes to the literature by examining whether the mass upzoning in Arlington exacerbates complaints associated with the development of housing next to one’s “backyard,” and therefore the risk of controversy. Since the EHO allows for the densification of all single-family districts, the policy is likely to attract disproportionate adjacent-use sentiment—such as complaints about traffic, school overcrowding, and insufficient parking spaces—relative to general anti-growth sentiment.

## 4. Methodology, Data, and Methods

### *4.1. Research Design*

This study employs a context-dependent case-study qualitative design to analyze public reactions to Arlington’s EHO (Creswell and Poth 2018). This study combines data and document analysis with an interview, and the city of Arlington is the unit of analysis. The objective of this study is to build an understanding of how Arlingtonians make sense of the Missing Middle and how their interpretations can influence the outcomes of mid-sized housing policies. To do so, this study uses “references to the literature that framed the study in the first place” (Merriam 2002, 7), specifically relying on Pendall’s (1999) NIMBY framework. Pendall (1999) analyzes NIMBY sentiments towards different types of housing and how the sentiments can predict controversy. Based on Pendall (1999), this study assumes that proximity to single-family homes and denser housing increases NIMBY sentiments and controversy. This study also assumes that there are two types of NIMBY sentiments—adjacent-use and anti-growth—and that adjacent-use sentiment increases the possibility of NIMBY controversy more than the anti-growth sentiment.

This study’s results have limited generalizability. However, the results might be transferable to similar counties implementing similar policies. Selection bias is another limitation of the study. The population that self-selects to provide

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feedback on Missing Middle might already have strong sentiments towards the policy. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted within the Arlington context but might be relevant to interpreting opposition to mass upzoning policies in other DMV municipalities with similar demographics and housing structures.

### **4.2. Data Sources**

The analysis relies on publicly available documents and official county materials from the Missing Middle Housing Study (Phase 2). The sources include (Arlington 2024d):

- a. Raw data from online feedback form (form made available to the public in Missing Middle Phase 1, Arlington 2024g): 1,703 responses in Excel format.
- b. Open-ended comments: 454 comments in Excel format.
- c. E-mails from constituents to Arlington County and the c: 279 emails in PDF format.
- d. Arlington County's responses to constituents' questions on Missing Middle (Response Matrix).
- e. Arlington's analysis of the aggregate data, a report in PDF format.

### **4.3. Data Coding**

This study gives meaning to the data deductively, based on Pendall's (1999) distinction between adjacent-use and anti-growth NIMBY sentiments. First, this study interprets Arlington's analysis of the aggregate data (item (e) above). Second, based on data downloaded in Excel and PDF formats (items (a), (b), (c), and (d) above) and transferred to MAXQDA, this study codes public reactions with the objective of distinguishing adjacent-use ("AU") from anti-growth ("AG") sentiments. This study categorizes AU and AG sentiments based on keywords and patterns found in the public reactions to Missing Middle. Keywords and patterns associated with negative sentiments referencing externalities that could directly impact neighbors are coded as AU. Words that relate to the day-to-day lives of Arlington's residents, such as school, park, trees, traffic, and neighborhood, are coded as AU. Keywords and patterns associated with more

general negative sentiment are coded as AG. Words that relate to residents' broader understanding of Arlington's urban life, such as population, growth, and environment, are coded as AG. This study also relies on an interview with a former member of Arlington's Planning Commission to better understand the county's perspective on the public reactions to Missing Middle.

## 5. Findings

### ***5.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents***

Most respondents to the online feedback form self-declare as white (54 percent). Those who prefer not to respond about their race or ethnicity make up 28 percent. Thus, white respondents represent between 54 - 82 percent of the total respondents. The county's average white population was 57% in 2024 (Census Reporter 2024). Single-family households account for 73 percent of the respondents. In Arlington, single-family zoning districts coincide with census tracts where more than 70 percent of residents are white (Arlington 2026a). Approximately 60 percent of respondents are above the age of 40, and 40 percent are above the age of 50. In 2024, the county's population above 40 was 44 percent, and above 50, 29 percent (Census Reporter 2024). These findings seem to corroborate that older white people, who typically advance negative sentiments towards new housing developments, dominate housing debate at the local level (Einstein et al. 2019, McNee and Pojani 2022).

### ***5.2. NIMBY Sentiments***

Analysis of the county's aggregate data shows that about 70 percent of the respondents believe that some type of housing should be excluded from the Missing Middle. Amongst those who favor the exclusion of housing types, 75 percent are homeowners and, 78 percent live in single-family homes. Conversely, 70 percent of respondents living in apartment buildings, condominiums, and townhouses oppose the exclusion of these housing types from Missing Middle. These figures seem to confirm the hypothesis that the potential proximity of housing development to single-family homes increases NIMBYism.

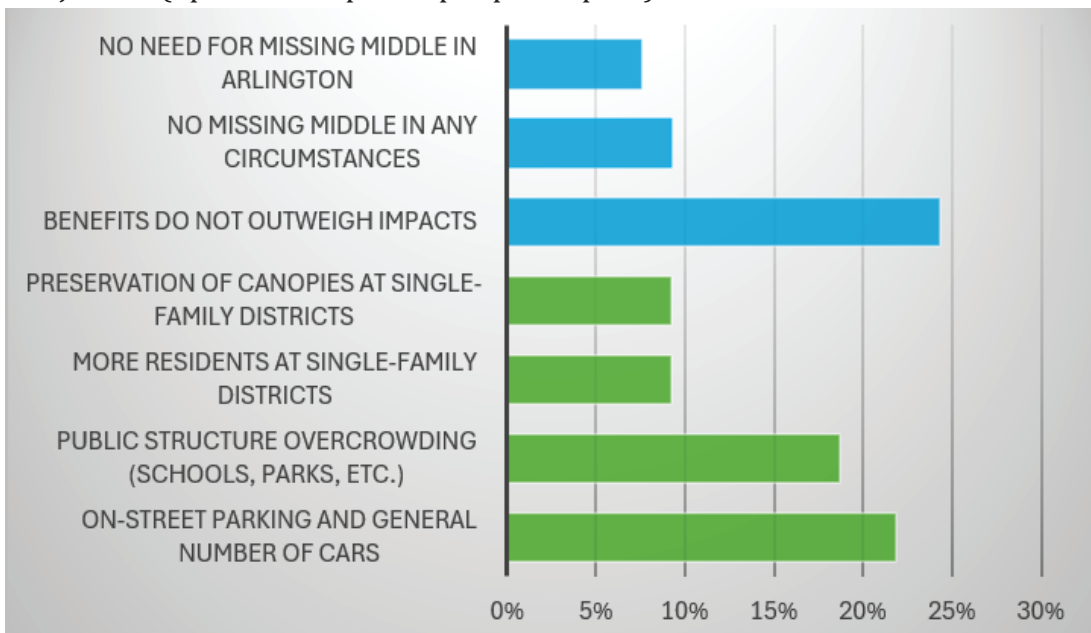
Participants were asked about how much they liked different types of mid-sized housing, ranging from two-unit to eight-unit structures, and which types of housing should be excluded from the Missing Middle. The rejection pattern seems to confirm that the denser the housing type, the greater the NIMBY sentiment. In fact, 8-unit multifamily homes were excluded from Missing

Middle after the population feedback.

### 5.3. Context Analysis

In Figure 1 below, I categorize the reasons respondents give in the online feedback form (as analyzed in the aggregate data) for rejecting mid-sized housing according to their sentiments: AU (green) or AG (blue). Around 60 percent of the reasons are based on adjacent-use sentiment and 40 percent on anti-growth sentiment (Arlington 2024d).

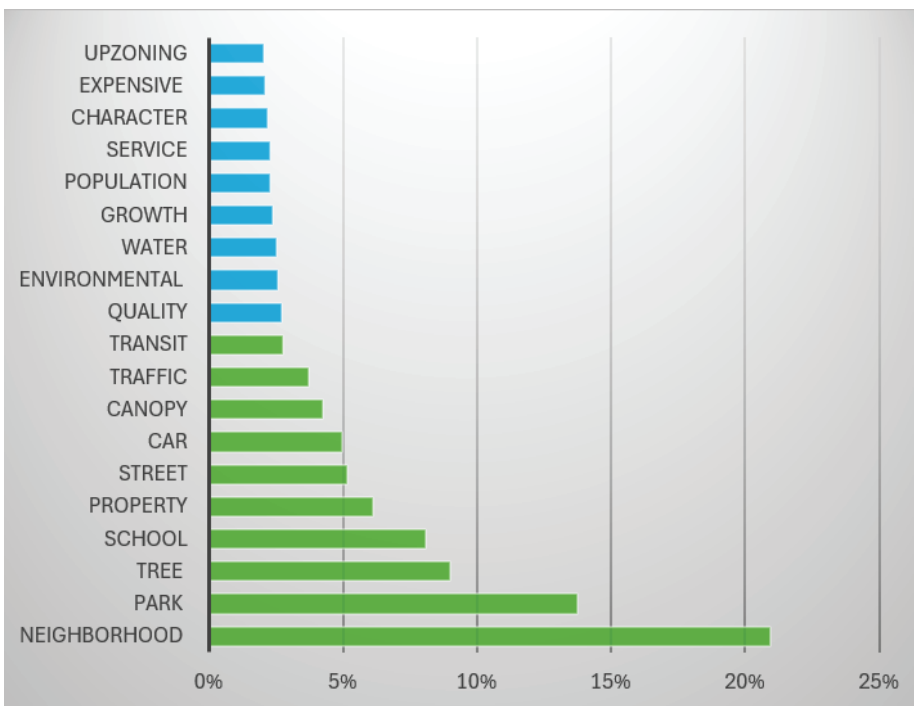
Figure 1. Aggregate Data: Online Feedback Form – Reasons for Housing Rejection (up to three options per participant)



Open-ended comments were mainly negative. Arlington coded the open-ended comments on the online feedback form as 63 percent negative, 25 percent positive, and 12 percent mixed. Growth, environmental issues, and neighborhood changes were major concerns. The same was true for open-ended comments outside the feedback form and in e-mails. Open-ended comments outside the feedback form were 64 percent negative, 26 percent positive, and 10 percent mixed; e-mails were 70 percent negative and 30 percent positive. Again, growth, environmental issues, and neighborhood changes were among the population’s top concerns. However, the coding of open-ended comments and e-mails that generated the aggregate data mixed AU and AG sentiments in the same categories. For example, the “growth” category included both AU (school overcrowding and traffic) and AG (quality of life) sentiments.

As it is not possible to disaggregate, reorganize, and recategorize Arlington’s data coding, this study uses MAXQDA to deductively categorize the open-ended comments and e-mails into AU (green) or AG (blue) sentiments (Figure 2 below). The criteria for the selection of keywords are that the keywords have at least 100 hits across all data (i.e., across all open-ended comments and e-mails) and have a negative connotation that may characterize NIMBY sentiments. This study does not segregate negative from positive comments but categorizes AU and AG sentiments amongst potentially NIMBY comments.

Figure 2. Open-ended Comments, E-mails, and Response Matrix: Adjacent-use v. Anti-Growth Sentiments



Most of the potentially NIMBY wording denotes AU sentiment. Approximately 80 percent of the comments can relate to the repercussions of land use development in one’s own backyard. “Park,” “tree,” “school,” “property,” and “traffic” are typically associated with AU complaints. Below are examples of the complaints:

- “I think it will create more traffic congestion, noise and parking problems” respondent 37 in open-ended comments).
- “Unfortunately, this will detract from the neighborhood aesthetic of single-family homes, decrease my property value, and create parking problems” respondent 22 in open-ended comments).

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“Neighborhood” is the most common keyword in the open-ended comments and e-mails. While “neighborhood” might denote proximity to problems associated with the Missing Middle, it is a broad enough expression to mask ulterior NIMBY motives. In the examples below, one can interpret “ruin” and “dramatically change” in various ways. Changes in neighborhood character can signal the residents’ legitimate frustration with changes in their long-term life plans or mask unspoken racial and economic prejudice (Quigley 2023; Einstein et al. 2020). For example:

- “It will ruin our neighborhood and we are most susceptible based on the requirements” (respondent 36 in open-ended comments).
- “Over time, it will dramatically change our neighborhood” (respondent 37 in open-ended comments).

AG sentiment is based on more general views on the impacts of the Missing Middle. Respondents do not mention any particularly negative impact on their lives but offer broad opinions against the development of mid-sized housing. Below are examples of general “growth” and “quality of life” comments:

- “Plus we can’t sustain the growth” (respondent 123 in open-ended comments).
- “Developers will profit and residents will see a decline in quality of life” (respondent 193 in open-ended comments).

This study’s findings suggest the prevalence of AU sentiment over AG sentiment in Arlington. AU responses dominate both the online feedback form responses (about 60 percent) and the open-ended comments and e-mails (about 80 percent).

### ***5.4. Interview***

This study complements the analysis of public comments with an interview of a former member of Arlington’s Planning Commission. The interview focused on the interviewee’s impressions on the relationship between Missing Middle’s mass upzoning and NIMBYism. The interviewee answered that Arlington already allowed mid-sized housing in most residential districts, including along transit corridors. In this sense, the option for expanding mid-sized housing was

to build it in single-family districts. If not through mass upzoning, the public official continued, the county would have had difficulties in establishing criteria for mid-sized housing in one single-family district but not the other. This single interview serves to illustrate some of the reasons behind the mass upzoning policy.

### ***5.5. Summary of Findings***

The results of the data analysis suggest the prevalence of AU over AG sentiment. The results reinforce the hypothesis that mass upzoning tends to attract stronger NIMBY sentiments. When all single-family households become potential neighbors to mid-sized housing, they are more likely to develop a heightened sense of territorial protection. The interview suggests that mass upzoning strategies may represent the most practical option for the development of mid-sized housing when municipalities already permit this type of housing in other residential zones. The interview also suggests that upzoning specific single-family districts, rather than all single-family districts, might be costly from a bargaining perspective. This study's findings could be applied to other municipalities in the DMV area that share some of the characteristics of Arlington, especially those municipalities with similar demographics and housing markets.

## **6. Conclusion**

The improvement of housing affordability in the United States depends on the substantial construction of new units across different price points. Arlington's mass upzoning policy is large in scope and can potentially contribute more to the development of mid-sized housing than piecemeal policies. The policy also reduces the political costs of having to discuss the upzoning of single-family districts one at a time. The mass upzoning policy is appealing to the extent that it covers all single-family districts. However, the implementation of the policy raises practical concerns. The Missing Middle policy makes all single-family households potential neighbors to new, denser housing, increasing the likelihood of local opposition. In Arlington, public reactions to the Missing Middle policy were mostly negative and largely associated with adjacent-use sentiment. Between 60 and 80 percent of the public comments referred to negative impacts close to the residents' homes, increasing the risk of controversy. This risk materialized in the pending lawsuit against new developments, when a few unsatisfied residents were able to halt the Missing Middle.

Even in a progressive and dense county like Arlington, residents can be

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protective of their turf when they predict they will be the ones to bear the costs of new development. In the face of stronger opposition, local policymakers could resort to piecemeal rezoning. In the case of piecemeal rezoning, policymakers increase the bargaining costs of new developments while making it easier to identify potential opponents. When policymakers can identify the opponents, they can better target their efforts to mitigate the opposition. For example, local authorities can target informational campaigns to specific neighborhoods, explaining the pros and cons of mid-sized housing and calculating and reducing their costs to the neighbors. It is easier to predict, calculate, explain, and reduce the costs of housing development to neighbors when costs are concentrated in smaller areas.

When all single-family households believe that they might bear the costs of new housing, it is more difficult to anticipate the level of opposition and target mitigation campaigns. When promoting Missing Middle policies, local authorities should expect strong opposition from single-family households. In this sense, future research should investigate the specific characteristics of NIMBYism towards the Missing Middle to better inform policymakers on how to mitigate it.

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