

Test Case – Church Redevelopment in Low Density Zone for Workforce Housing

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Civic Federation Housing Committee

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6:30-8:00pm



Non-Profits Face Hard Times, Seek Redevelopment or Changed Land Use

- Nationally non-profits – esp religious ones -- face declining funding. Some project 100,000 of the nation's 384,000 churches and other houses of worship could close in coming years.
- In Arlington, that could affect 70+ Christian churches, 3 Latter-Day Saints churches, 8 [nondenominational](#) churches, one Jewish congregation, and a metaphysical chapel. Countless other non-profits are in the same boat.
- Many of these organizations own land, often in residential zones (R-5-R-20) that allow only Single family (or potentially Missing Middle) housing.
- Many have already pursued redevelopment; such as the American Legion project in Virginia Square to provide housing for homeless vets ([Terwilliger](#), provide link) that we looked at last year.
- All the projects have required rezonings and/or land use changes. For example: Melwood Horticultural (Aurora Highlands), the YMCA (Va Square), Clarendon Presbyterian Church (Lyon Village), Church of the Redeemer and Gilliam Place (Arlington Heights) and the Unity Homes project in Ballston. (add links)
- Are these projects capturing/replacing the loss of community interests/assets such as green space/daycare/churches? Are we getting sufficient affordable housing units? Do the projects fit within the existing neighborhood density?
- Drawing on my experience in New York, we are going to look today at a hypothetical church project in an R-6 area that can show how to bring redevelopment that is closer to the current land use and density than many of these other projects and hope to start a dialog about real world projects going forward.

PROPERTY: Hudson St. Parking Lot

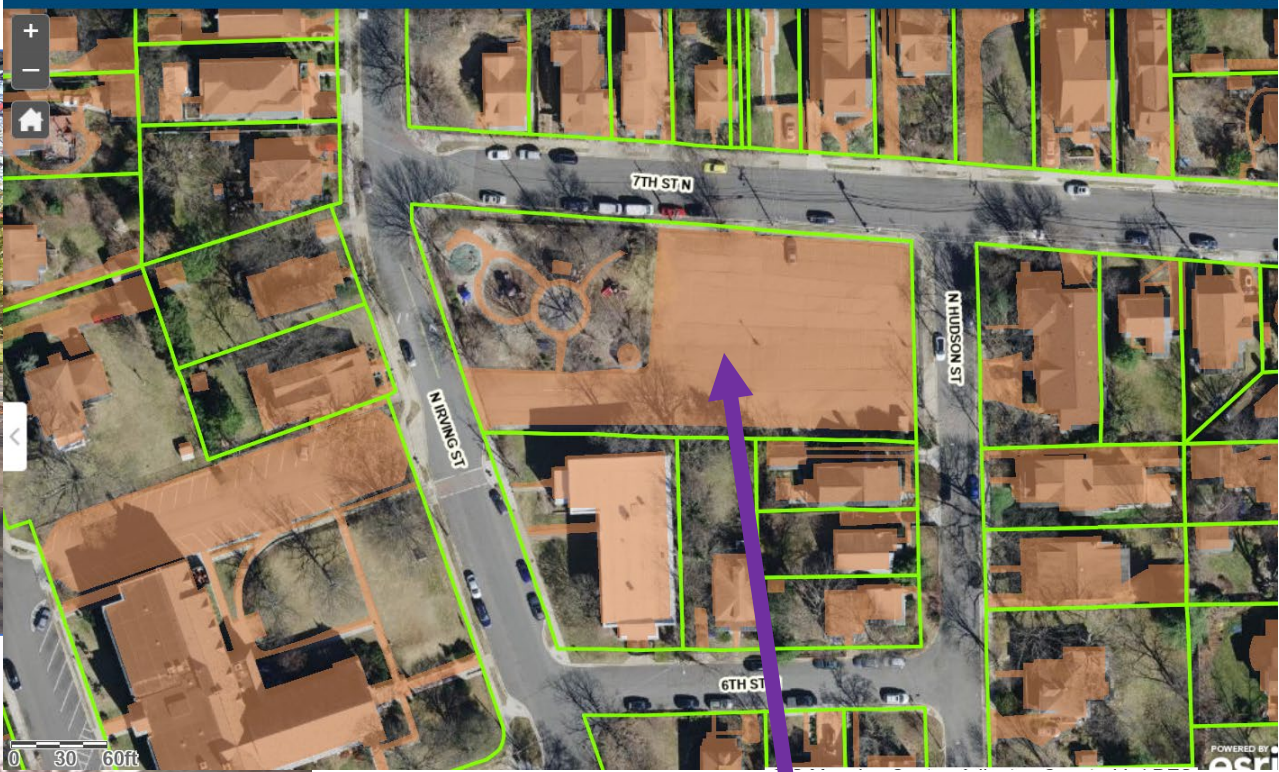
Across from Clarendon United Methodist Church at 606 N. Irving St.

- **Current Use:** Parking Lot and Playground owned by Church across from historic church (parking is in Lyon Park Civic Assn, Church is in Ashton Heights)
- **Land Use:** low residential
- **Zoning** R-6
- **Lot Size:** 40,068 ft²
- **2025 Assessment** \$2.06 million
- **Tax Status** Tax Exempt
- **RPC** [19-038-003](#)



Image of church, which is not part of this parcel

Property Context



Church



Parking Lot

Guiding Principles

- R-6 Zoning Regulations
- General Land Use Plan
- [Lyon Park 2019 Neighborhood Conservation Plan](#)
- Arlington Comp Plan elements (transportation, housing, natural resources, stormwater plans, etc.)

Affordable Housing and Area Median Incomes (AMI) for Arlington

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculates the Area Median Income (AMI) for Arlington, Virginia annually; it is used to determine income limits for affordable housing. “Workforce” housing is above these levels.
- Income limits by household size
- **3 people:** 80% AMI is \$111,440, and 50% AMI is \$69,650
- **4 people:** 80% AMI is \$123,760, and 50% AMI is \$77,350
- **5 people:** 80% AMI is \$133,680, and 50% AMI is \$83,550
- **6 people:** 80% AMI is \$143,600, and 50% AMI is \$89,750
- Income ranges
- **Low-income:** Between 80% and 50% AMI
- **Very low-income:** Between 50% and 30% AMI
- **Extremely low-income:** Below 30% AMI

Allowed Usages and Density

- R-6 zone allows single family detached (SFD) homes capped at 35” and up to 10 units per acre.
- That reflects what we see here, with exception of an older small apt. building south of the parking lot.
- In 2023, the county began allowing up to 6-plex units in R-6 zone (typical lot size of 6,000 square feet.) In 2024, a judge put a hold on multiplex (EHO) zoning and it remains under litigation.
- If this N. Irving/Hudson St. lot were subdivided according to current zoning, it could yield approx. 6 lots each with one SFD.

Food for Thought

- Should the county explore other ways to make up the delta between market rate and non-market rate structures?
- Should the state consider other ways to make up the same delta? (Tax abatements)
- Can the property retain tax exempt status?
- Should the units remain affordable for longer than 30 years?
- Should the community put affordable (workforce, low income, or even 120% of AMI) housing ahead of other community goals?
- Is “workforce” housing even compatible with Fair Housing Act, and will it crowd out higher needs for true AH?
- How do these projects fit within Neighborhood Conservation Plans?
- What other questions should we be asking?