

# 2026 Legislative Session Zoning and Housing Bills

Arlington County Civic Federation Discussion with  
Hon. State Senator Barbara Favola and Hon. Takis  
Karantonis, Arlington County Board

April 14, 2026

## Key Issues – Dillon Rule and Housing (HB 594 [signed], HB 1279, HB 888)

- Understanding Where We Are on these Bills (what passed, what's still in review) (**Bodine, Favola**)
- County Position vis-à-vis Delegated Authorities (**Karantonis**)
- County Next Steps, (amending ACZO, explaining impact, educating non-profits, neighbors (**Karantonis**))
- Role of State Agencies, Legislative Staff, Timelines (how can Arlington engage?) (**Favola**)
- Looking Ahead on Housing Policy (what is overall idea on housing and balance of power bet State/County?) (**Favola/Karantonis**)

# Dillon's Rule – Are Things Changing re Zoning and Land Use?

- “**Home rule**” states allow local governments to govern themselves
- Virginia follows the Dillon Rule which gives local government three types of powers: those granted expressly, those . . . implied in or incident to those expressly granted, and those essential to the declared objects and purposes of the corporation.
- Land use and zoning has largely been delegated to local authorities
- Arlington ALWAYS stressed keeping local control over zoning as its primary ASK in Richmond

**Q: If Richmond is stepping in with new zoning mandates, what does this mean for long term? Where do citizens engage? What are the localities' powers? How will Richmond execute these laws that are locally implemented?**

# Arlington 2026 Leg Priorities on Housing – No Hint of Richmond Action to Come

## G. Housing & Land Use

1. Adequately Fund Affordable Housing Initiatives: Ensure the Virginia Housing Trust Fund and local housing initiatives are adequately resourced and have the flexibility they need to address housing needs.
2. Create and Maintain Inclusive Housing Standards and Planning: Make sure housing policies consider the needs of individuals from all backgrounds, including older Virginians and those with disabilities, and that anti-discrimination policies are enforced.
3. Protect Tenants: Strengthen tenants' rights by providing additional recourse, including local enforcement, for inadequate health and safety conditions and access to legal resources during eviction proceedings. Support measures to keep housing costs affordable, including anti-rent gouging protections.
4. Provide Maximum Flexibility for Addressing Housing Affordability and Quality: Allow for creative solutions for developing more housing and for flexibility in dealing with housing quality issues such as inadequate heating or A/C causing risks during extreme heat or cold.

# Signed into Law - HB 594

## Admin Approval for Density for Some AH projects

15.2-2292.3. Expedited approval for increased density for certain affordable housing developments.

A local governing body may by ordinance allow a zoning administrator to use an administrative process to approve rezoning applications for affordable housing developments, provided that:

- **At least 75% of housing units are affordable;**
- **The AH development complies with Va. Fair Housing Law;**
- **It is connected to a public/community water supply or sewage system; and**
- **It is within or adjacent to an area identified by the locality that could support increased density development and provide access to services**

**Q: Does this mean SOME AH projects no longer need site plan review? Which ones, why? What is expected impact? Will these projects be more likely to get Board AHIF funding than ones with lower AH percentages?**

# Gov Seeks to Amend HB 888

## Reduced Onsite Parking

- Any locality that has adopted a zoning ordinance . . . shall not require . . . minimum off-street parking for residential, multifamily, or mixed-use development located within a designated area [more than]:
  - 1. One-half parking space per dwelling unit for multifamily/mixed-use residential development;
  - 2. One parking space per unit for 1- and 2-family and two-family dwellings and townhouses
- Any locality with a population over 20,000 shall, by ordinance, provide for an administrative reduction of minimum off-street parking requirements of not less than 20% for residential, multifamily, or mixed-use development proposed on parcels not located within a designated area.

Current rule: 1 space/unit for homes, ½ space/unit for homes with ¾ mile to metro or ½ mil to premium transit stop

**Q: What is “a designated area”? Would this bill mean EHO’s above 2 units would have fewer parking spots, what does it mean for the site plan projects?**

**Q: Have you analyzed Gov. amendments? Will you vote for them?**

# Governor Seeks to Amend HB 1279

## “Faith in Housing” - Mixed Use Housing By Right

- **Allows by-right upzoning for properties owned by certain non-profits (religious and charitable orgs, but NOT Army Navy Golf Course)**
- **Owners must have held the land for 5 years before developing**
- **Allows mixed use land use (not just residential)**
- **Requires 60% of units be affordable to households of 80%-120% area median income for 30 years**
- **Takes effect Jan 1, 2027**
- **Allows 20 units per acre (u/a) and 45' regardless of zone**
- **Allows taller/denser zoning than above in certain circumstances (w/in 500” or opportunity zones?)**

# HB 1279 “Faith in Housing – Analysis/Questions

- Property with exception of small non profit onsite, will pay taxes
- Property with exception of small non profit onsite, will become fully market rate housing in 30 years
- Unless properties DONATE land, cost may still be prohibitive
- Potential major backlog for Virginia Housing projects (9% tax credits). Of the 2025 approved projects for NOVA, 3 were in Arlington: Agape Chantilly House Phase 1, [Wesley Melwood](#), Avonlea Family, [Barcroft New Construction Phase I](#), Dogwood Farm Station Apartments, CH6 Nine, and [Terraces at Arlington View West](#).

**Q: How many projects that have already been done in Arlington, like Gilliam Place, relied on churches DONATING land? How will projects be financed if no donations?**

**Q: How can these projects proceed without substantial new funding from AHIF and/or Virginia Housing or some other source? How will these projects stack up against Arlington projects that have gone through 4.1 site plans, do those projects now become less viable/more costly? Does it undermine the Sector and Area plans, which is where Arlington has already MAPPED OUT such density? How many of these properties are low density zones, how many in high density/mixed use zones?**

# Real World Outcomes – Domino Effect

Melwood 58 u/a density replicates  
along 23<sup>rd</sup> St. S.

AURORA HIGHLANDS CIVIC ASSOCIATION

**POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT on 23<sup>rd</sup> STREET S  
RESULTING FROM FAITH IN HOUSING (VIRGINIA SB388 and HB1279)**



# Real World Outcomes?

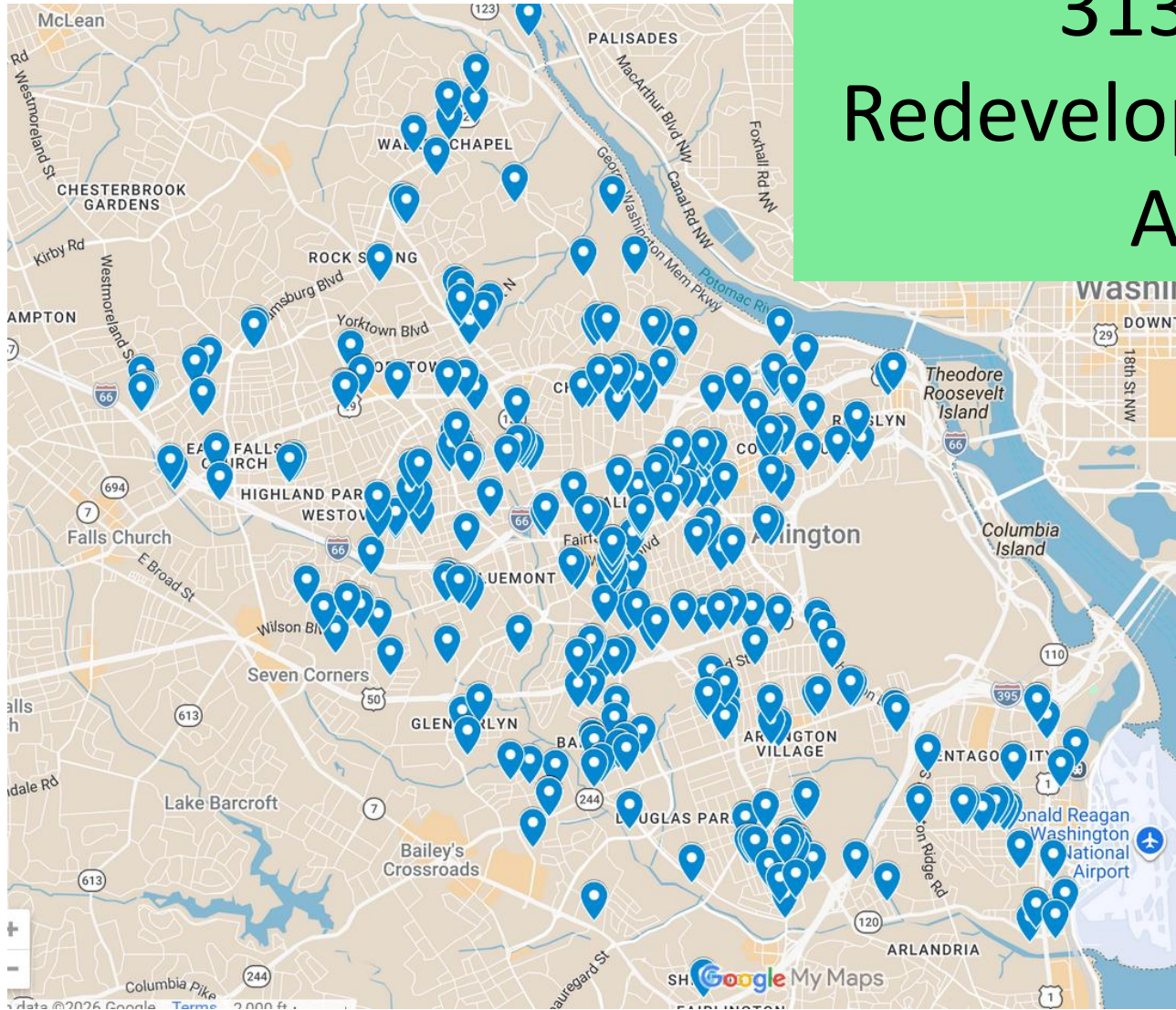
## Lyon Park Stepdowns – Confer 55' or 70' Height?

Church at 712 and  
716 N. Barton St. -  
zoned R-6, has 1  
church and one  
rectory (home)

500 ft  
to edge  
of bldg.



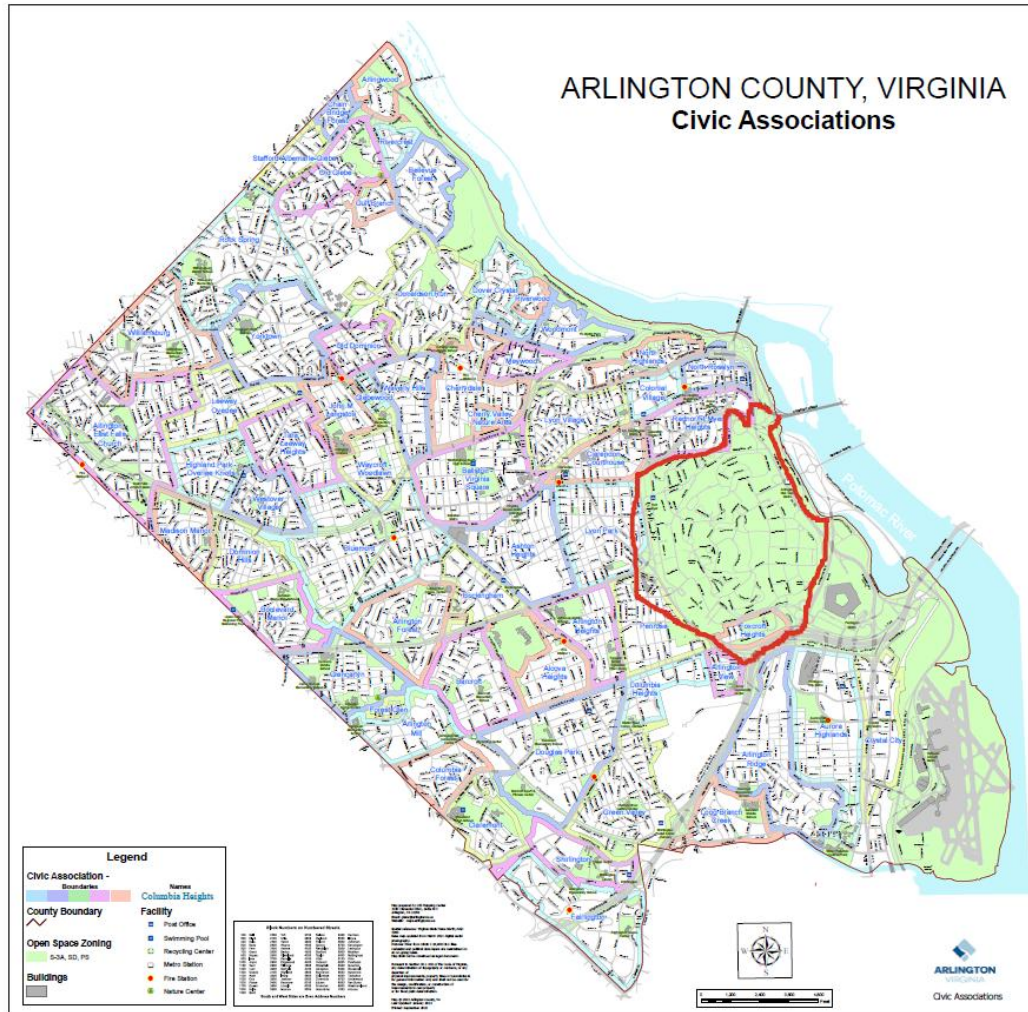
# 313 Potential Redevelopment “Sites” in Arlington



- Arlington has approx. 513 tax exempt parcels that would qualify under Faith in Housing bill
- They are co-located with (and expand the geographic area of) 318 discrete addresses (> one RPC per site)

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1WKVgRRzCkXryGHXlyx495tIntwHErEk&ll=38.88422574189864%2C-77.10844289999999&z=13>

# Substantial Acreage in Play



- Arlington National Cemetery is 639 acres
- HB 1279 upzones 641 acres in Arl with denser land use;
- Not just residential, but ancillary uses (coffee shop, daycare, etc.)
- Unclear # of acres are in low medium or high density zones, so unknown impact;
- Need the County to analyze ASAP and advise community