

*Missing Middle Housing Study*

# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING HOUSING CHOICES

*Bulletin*

3



# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING HOUSING CHOICES

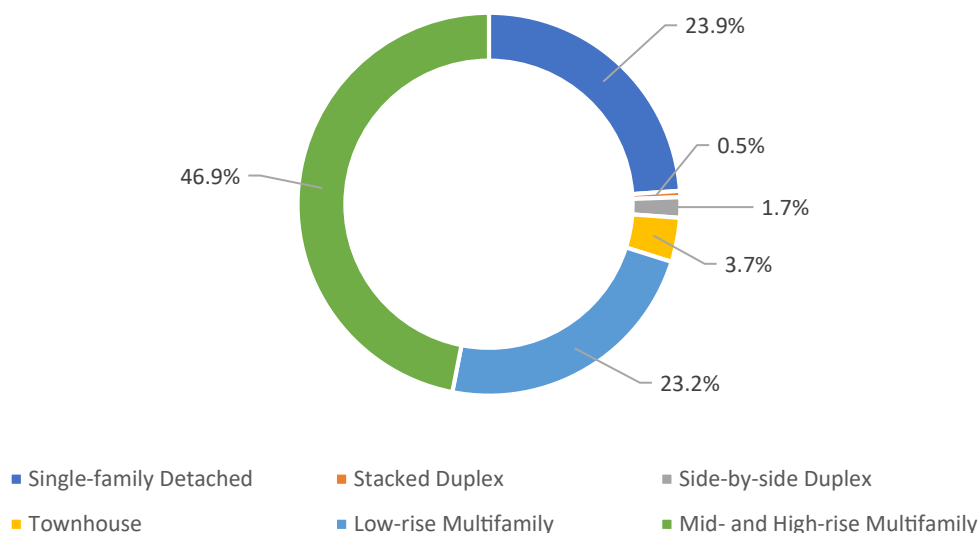
This bulletin provides an overview of Arlington's housing stock and information on existing middle housing found in Arlington today.

## OVERVIEW

Arlington's 26 square miles contain over 116,000 housing units, as of 2019. These housing units are spread throughout the County within the Rosslyn-Ballston and Richmond Highway Metrorail Corridors, along Columbia Pike, and in Arlington's many residential neighborhoods.

Countywide, approximately 47% of Arlington's housing stock is considered mid- or high-rise multifamily housing, while single-family detached housing makes up approximately 24%. Taken together, Arlington's mid- and high-rise multifamily and single-family detached housing make up approximately 71% of Arlington's housing, and 23% is low-rise multifamily. Only 0.5% of Arlington's housing is stacked duplex, 1.7% is side-by-side duplex, and 3.7% is townhouse.

Distribution of Housing Units by Housing Type

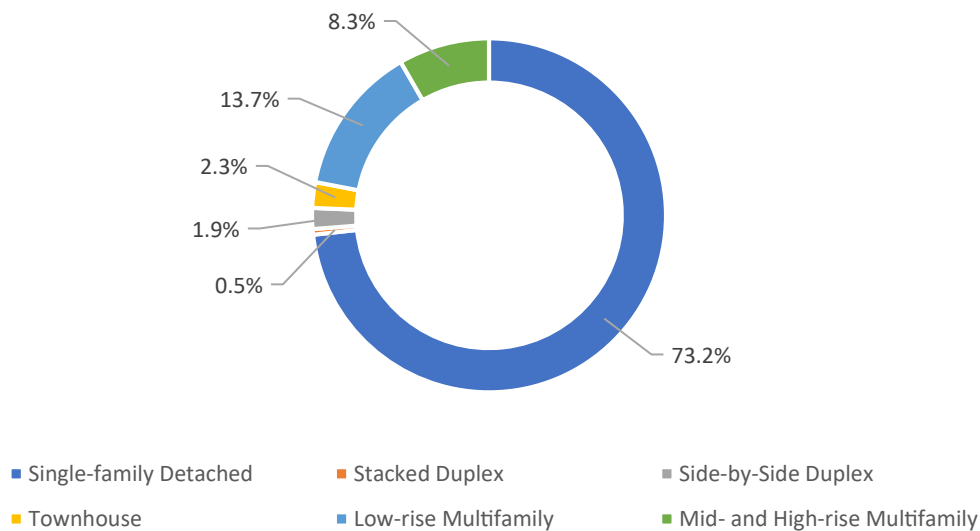


Source: Arlington County, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD)

## OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

Single-family detached housing, which makes up 24% of Arlington's housing, is located on approximately 5,500 acres and makes up over 73% of the land area that contains housing. Together, stacked duplex, side-by-side duplex, townhouse, and low-rise multifamily make up only 18% of the residential land area in Arlington.

Percentage of Total Housing Unit Land Area by Housing Type



Source: Arlington County, CPHD

**SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED HOUSING MAKES UP A QUARTER OF ARLINGTON'S HOUSING STOCK BUT OCCUPIES OVER THREE-QUARTERS OF ARLINGTON'S RESIDENTIAL LAND.**

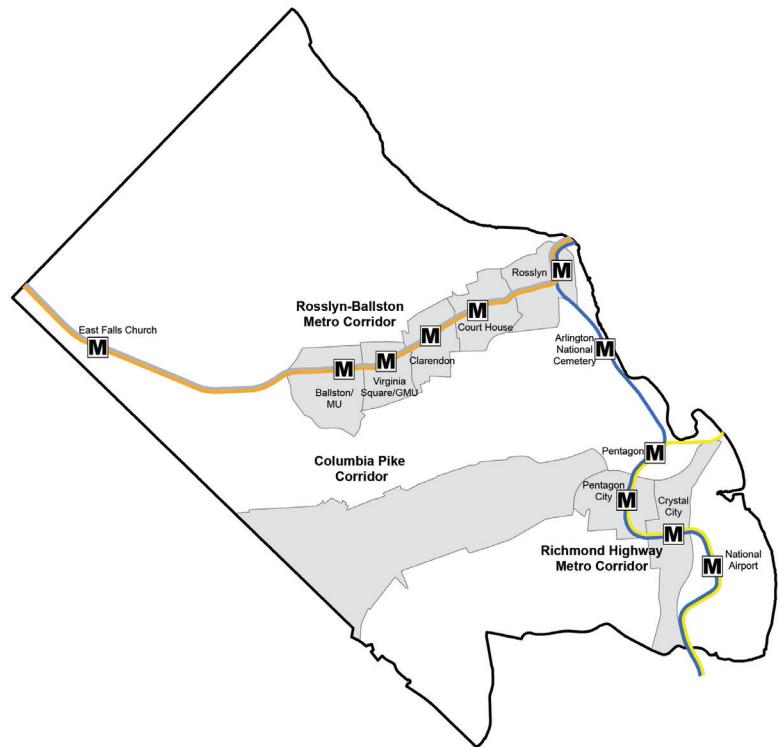
## LOOKING AHEAD

The current geographic distribution of housing stock throughout Arlington includes several notable benefits, yet also significant challenges. Benefits include mid- and high-rise housing development close to transit and housing options for households seeking an urban lifestyle. However, as illustrated in Bulletin 2, there is a lack of housing affordable to a range of individuals and households in many parts of Arlington, which leads to challenges for equity and diversity. What do you see as the benefits and challenges of Arlington's current distribution of housing stock throughout the County?

## ARLINGTON'S CORRIDORS

Arlington contains three major planning corridors: the Rosslyn-Ballston and Richmond Highway Metrorail Corridors and Columbia Pike.<sup>1</sup> These three corridors – which together make up approximately 22% of Arlington's 26 square miles – are guided by County Board-adopted sector and area plans that concentrate higher-density development along major transportation corridors. In some parts of the corridors, land has been built out, leading to land scarcity and pressure on adjoining Residential (R) districts. As a result of these plans, most of the housing developed in these corridors is mid- and high-density multifamily housing. This housing type makes up approximately 72% of the total housing in the three planning corridors. Only 23% of the housing in these three planning corridors is stacked duplex, side-by-side duplex, townhouse, and low-rise multifamily. These housing types are generally located along the periphery of each corridor as a transition to lower-density residential development patterns.

1 Plan Lee Highway (PLH) is an ongoing planning process that will develop a vision and specific planning guidance for the Lee Highway corridor. For the purposes of the Research Compendium, the PLH area is included in the overview of Arlington's Neighborhoods in the following section.

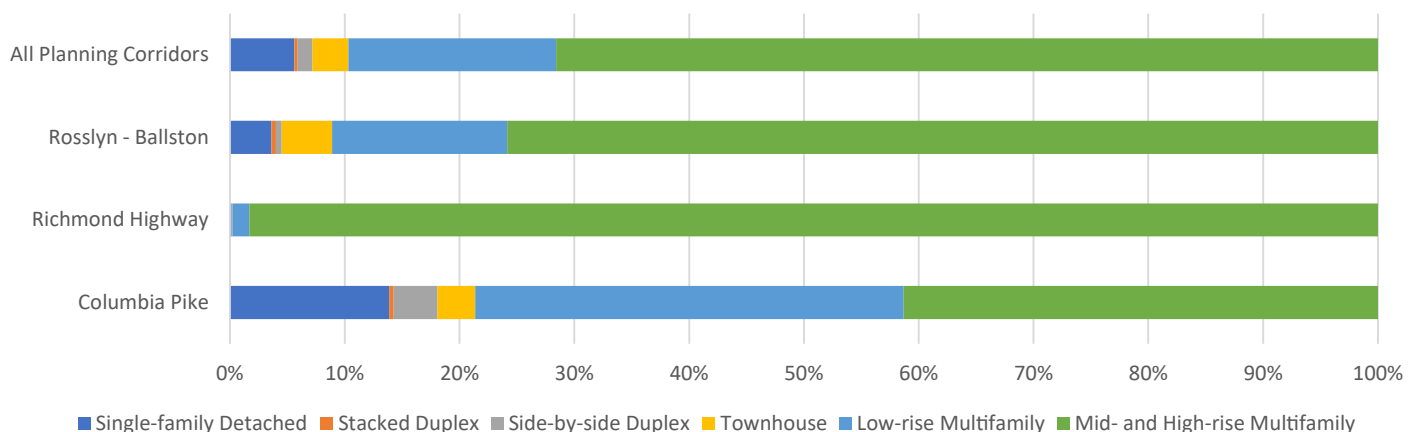


Source: Arlington County, CPHD

## LOOKING AHEAD

Do you think there are additional areas within Arlington's corridors where missing middle housing might be appropriate?

Housing Type Distribution in Planning Corridors



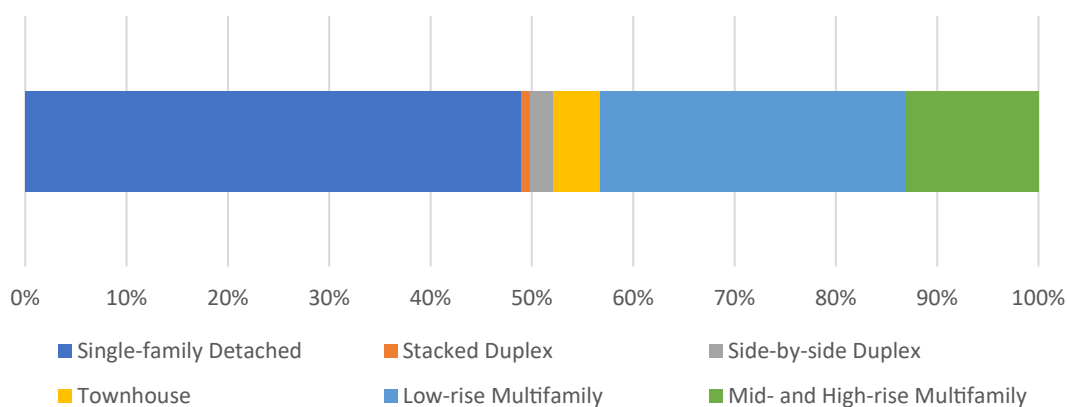
Source: Arlington County, CPHD



# ARLINGTON'S RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Arlington's residential neighborhoods – defined in this bulletin as the areas outside the three planning corridors – are not guided by special plans like those adopted for the corridors. While certain neighborhoods, including East Falls Church, Cherrydale, and Green Valley, are guided by area or revitalization plans, most of Arlington's residential neighborhoods are guided broadly by the County's 11 Comprehensive Plan elements, including the General Land Use Plan (GLUP), which lays out the County's land use vision, and the Zoning Ordinance, which provides rules and regulations for each of the County's 38 zoning districts. To help guide the land use vision, the GLUP contains Development and Growth Goals, which the County Board adopted in 1975 during the planning process for the Metro corridors. These goals support a vision of high-density development within the Metro corridors and the preservation of lower-density areas elsewhere in the County. As a result, for Arlington's residential neighborhoods outside of the planning corridors, the GLUP provides a vision for low-density residential development, and the Zoning Ordinance provides regulations that are consistent with that vision.

Housing Type Distribution for Arlington's Neighborhoods Outside Planning Corridors



Source: Arlington County, CPHD

Within these residential neighborhoods today, nearly 50% of the housing stock is single-family detached housing, 30% is low-rise multifamily, and 13% is mid- and high-rise multifamily. Housing types that could be considered middle housing are only envisioned in the GLUP for very small portions of Arlington's neighborhoods outside of the planning corridors. As a result, only 0.9% is stacked duplex, 2.3% is side-by-side duplex, and 4.6% is townhouse.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What do you think are the biggest issues resulting from the lack of missing middle housing types in Arlington's neighborhoods?

# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING

As in many places in the country, middle housing is already part of Arlington's housing stock. These housing types are interspersed throughout Arlington's neighborhoods and were predominantly built in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to meet the social and economic needs of a wide array of growing families. Over time, Arlington's Zoning Ordinance was amended to limit or exclude smaller and more-affordable housing types (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, row houses, apartments) from certain residential zoning districts (for more information on Arlington's zoning history, see Bulletin 4). Today, middle housing can be found in Arlington as standalone buildings among single-family detached houses, in small clusters within neighborhoods, and comprising a significant portion of the housing in a neighborhood.

Arlington's existing middle housing can be generally identified as stacked duplex, side-by-side duplex, townhouse, or small multiplex (for the purposes of the Research Compendium, low-rise multifamily residential buildings consisting of three to sixteen housing units).



*Stacked Duplex*



*Side-by-Side Duplex*

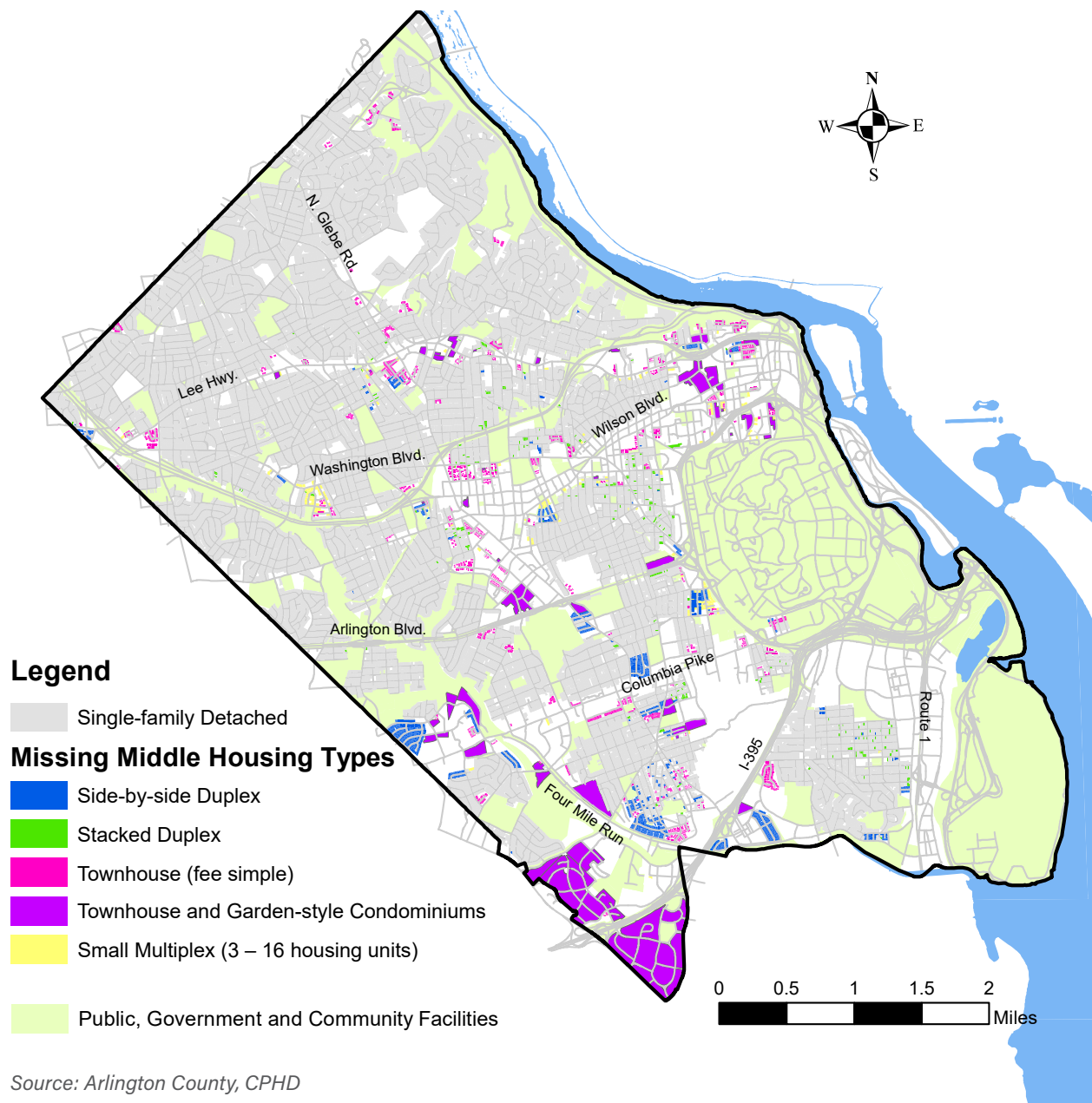


*Townhouse*



*Small Multiplex*

# EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING IN ARLINGTON



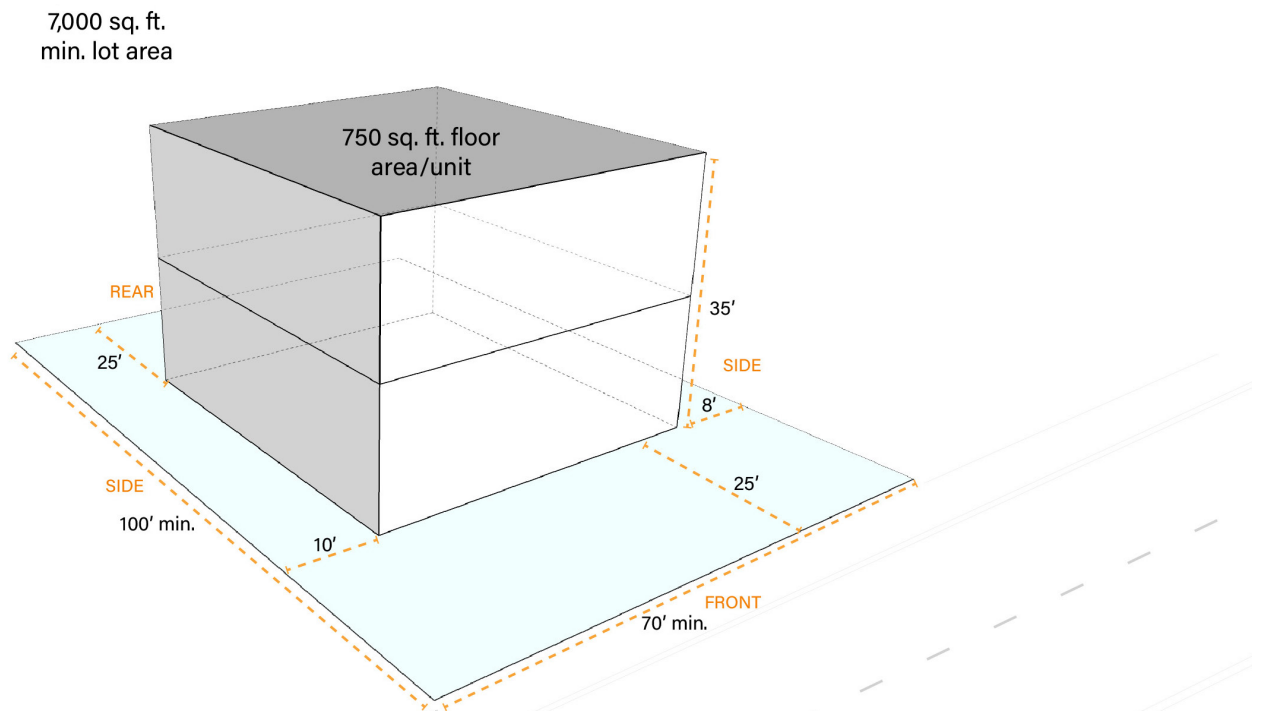
The map above indicates the location of existing middle housing throughout Arlington. The following pages present highlights of a qualitative field survey conducted to characterize Arlington's existing middle housing.

## LOOKING AHEAD

- What are the most attractive features of each middle housing type?
- What housing types are missing?

# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING

## STACKED DUPLEX



*This diagram reflects the current Zoning Ordinance standards for this dwelling type where they are allowed. The standards presented in these diagrams do not reflect the conditions of existing dwellings, which in many cases were built before these standards were adopted.*

### DESCRIPTION

A stacked duplex (known in Arlington's Zoning Ordinance as a duplex and a type of two-family dwelling) is a small residential building on one lot that contains two housing units, one stacked on top of the other. In Arlington, stacked duplexes are required to look and function similar to a single-family detached house. The building is required to have only one front entrance. This front entrance can then open to separate entrances to the two housing units; alternatively, a separate, dedicated entrance to one of the housing units can be located on the side of the building. The upper housing unit in a stacked duplex can either be stacked completely or partially on top of the lower housing unit.

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Unlike the side-by-side duplex, the stacked duplex was most-often constructed as a standalone development embedded within lower-density residential neighborhoods, away from major corridors and commercial districts. While some examples were built in the 1930s and 1940s, stacked duplexes were built predominately in the 1950s and 1960s, up until the Zoning Ordinance was amended in 1962 to only permit stacked duplexes by use permit. Architecturally, they were primarily built using the single-family red-brick masonry colonial style architecture. Like the side-by-side duplex, the stacked duplex tends to favor gable



# STACKED DUPLEX



*Cherrydale*



*Columbia Heights*



*Aurora Hills*



*Cherrydale*

roofs. Oftentimes, the best way to identify if a unit is a stacked duplex is to see two mailboxes and picture windows on the second floor.

**Open Space:** Stacked duplexes appear to have front and rear yards that function similar to a single-family detached house, resulting in shared yard space for the two housing units in the duplex.

**Parking:** The stacked duplexes surveyed are served by either on-street parking or the properties possessed a shared driveway for both housing units that led to a small parking lot behind the building.

**Trees:** While located on lots large enough to support trees and other landscaping features, the stacked duplexes surveyed generally lack larger trees; however, the neighborhood context did not have many large trees either.

**Orientation of Buildings:** The stacked duplexes surveyed face onto the street, like single-family detached houses located in the same neighborhoods.

**Condition:** Most stacked duplexes surveyed are older buildings that have been maintained to resemble their original design. Like the side-by-side duplex properties, some properties show evidence of building deterioration, while other properties reflect mid-century Arlington.

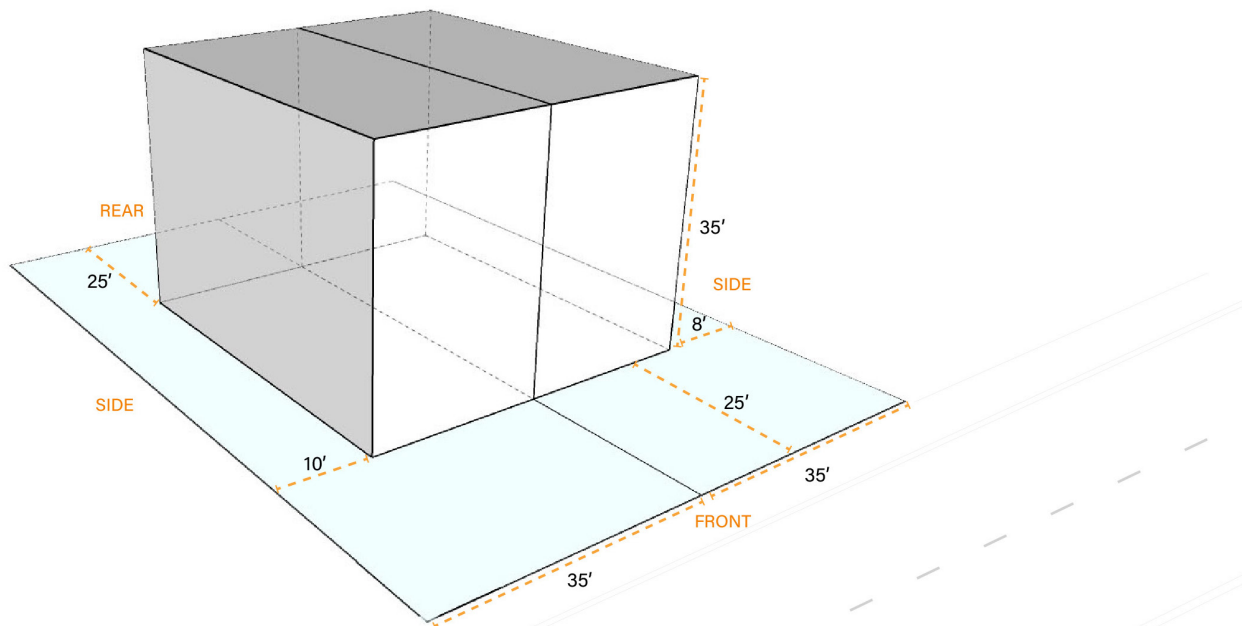
**Architectural Features:** Most stacked duplexes surveyed feature a prominent entrance on the front of the building located under an overhang. The design of most units is identical top and bottom except for a shared main entrance on the ground floor. Because stacked duplexes usually have a single owner, improvements such as enhanced entryways, additions, changes in roofing materials and porches are made to both units.

**Location:** The stacked duplexes surveyed were located within residential neighborhoods that primarily contained single-family detached houses.

# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING

## SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX

3,500 sq. ft.  
min. lot area



*This diagram reflects the current Zoning Ordinance standards for this dwelling type where they are allowed. The standards presented in these diagrams do not reflect the conditions of existing dwellings, which in many cases were built before these standards were adopted.*

### DESCRIPTION

A side-by-side duplex (known in Arlington's Zoning Ordinance as a semidetached dwelling and a type of two-family dwelling) is a small residential building located on two separate lots that contains two housing units next to each other. The two housing units within the building share a common wall with each other. Side-by-side duplexes allow for separate ownership of the two lots and housing units, so each housing unit can have its own separate entrance on the front of the building or side of the building if on a corner lot.

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Largely constructed in the 1930s and 1940s, the side-by-side duplex was frequently built in areas of Arlington where non-white people were able to live and as a cluster subdivision near major thoroughfares and commercial districts. Architecturally, they resemble the single-family red-brick masonry colonial style architecture that predominated at this time. Later examples in the 1950s and 1960s exhibited more variety, reflective of the single-family detached housing trend toward a single-story ranch style. Early examples had flat roofs in more urban locations, but this housing type generally tended to favor gable roofs.

**Open Space:** As each housing unit in a side-by-side duplex is located on an individual lot, this housing type provides each owner with private open space on their lot. In some cases, owners maintain fencing

## SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX



*Longbranch Creek*



*Waverly Hills*



*Bluemont*

around their yard. In other cases, the front yards are unfenced, creating the sense of a larger open space between the side-by-side duplex and the street.

**Parking:** Older side-by-side duplexes provide little off-street parking and no garages, most likely due to the period of construction prior to the adoption of off-street parking requirements. Most renovated side-by-side duplex lots provide space for surface parking on a driveway. Newer side-by-side duplexes are built with private garages as well as driveways.

**Trees:** Side-by-side duplex lots provide open space for trees, which range from small ornamental varieties to mature evergreen and hardwood canopy trees. Oftentimes, the open space associated with these duplexes is similar in size to a single-family detached house.

**Orientation of Buildings:** Most side-by-side duplexes surveyed face out onto the street, similar to single-family detached houses. In some instances, a front entrance to one of the two housing units faces toward a side yard, instead of the front yard and street. On corner lots, the entrances tend to each face a different street.

**Condition:** Many side-by-side duplexes surveyed are older buildings maintained to reflect the original brick design of the building. The exteriors of some older side-by-side duplexes surveyed have been added onto and updated and reflect more contemporary design styles. The overall building and site condition is in a large degree dictated by the level of maintenance over the decades. Poorly-maintained properties show evidence of façade, windows, roofs and foundation deterioration and marginally-maintained site conditions. Better-maintained properties reflect the historic charm and scale of mid-century Arlington growth. Newer side-by-side duplexes surveyed are larger than older side-by-side duplexes, reflective of modern zoning standards which require a minimum lot size and permit construction of larger dwellings with greater maximum lot coverage, and they also tend to have modern exterior finishes.

**Architectural Features:** The side-by-side duplexes surveyed feature a range of front stoop/porch configurations. Some side-by-side duplexes have a front stoop, while others have a front porch large enough for a seating area. The design of most units is symmetrical, but due to different ownership, oftentimes each side may evolve differently to include such things as enhanced entryways, additions, changes in roofing materials and porches.

**Location:** The side-by-side duplexes surveyed were often located within a neighborhood of primarily single-family detached houses. In some instances, however, side-by-side duplexes surveyed were located in a cluster of multiple side-by-side duplexes, creating a community of these middle housing units. These typically are located near transportation and commercial corridors.



# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING

## SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX



*Ballston - Virginia Square*



*Arlington Heights*



*Cherrydale*



*Ashton Heights*



## SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX



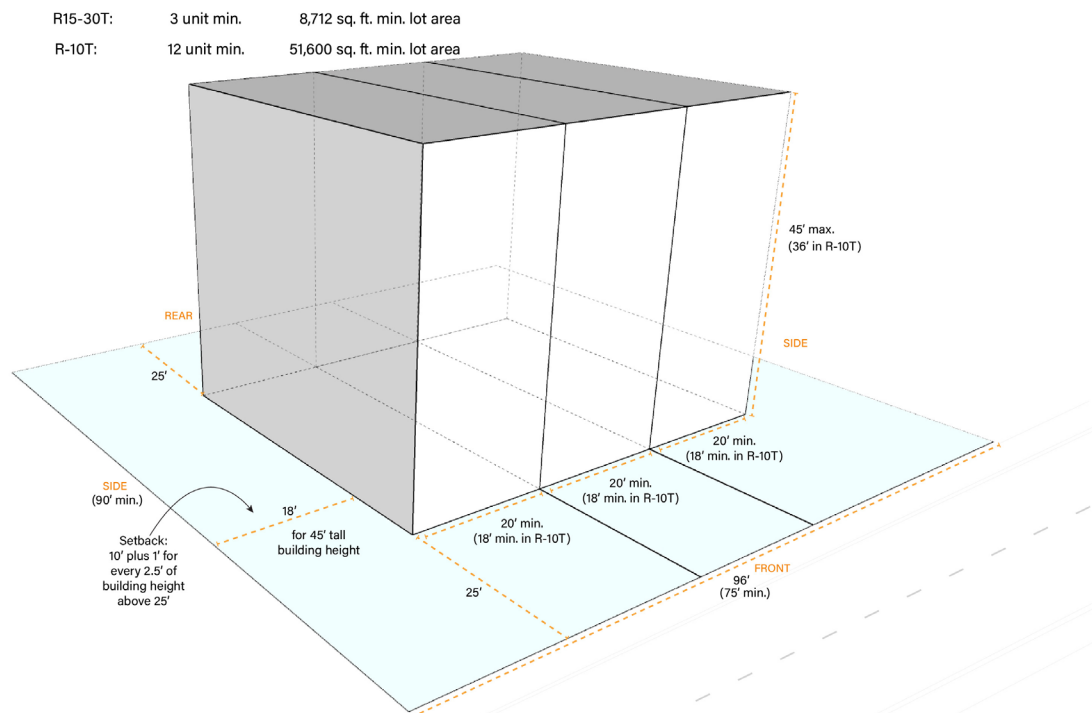
*Ballston - Virginia Square*



*Longbranch Creek*

# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING

## TOWNHOUSE



*This diagram reflects the current Zoning Ordinance standards for this dwelling type where they are allowed. The standards presented in these diagrams do not reflect the conditions of existing dwellings, which in many cases were built before these standards were adopted.*

### DESCRIPTION

A townhouse is an attached housing unit that is located in a series of three or more attached housing units. Townhouses share common walls with adjacent townhouses, and each house has its own separate entrance from the street or private yard. In Arlington, townhouses can be located on individual lots, resulting in individual owners, or multiple townhouses can be located on a single lot and can be rented or owned as condominiums.

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Built both as a cluster subdivision near major thoroughfares and commercial districts and as a standalone small development in single family neighborhoods, the townhouse was originally permitted as a "row house" until banned in 1938 as incompatible with single-family development. It was then reintroduced as a permitted housing type in the 1970s by special exception site plan only, originally only as clusters within areas designated "Low" Residential on the GLUP (in the R-10T zoning district) and then later in Metro corridors as a transition to lower-density residential neighborhoods. As a result, most townhouses in Arlington were largely constructed in the 1980s through present. Architecturally, they resemble the traditional row house with widths from 18 to 25 feet. Most townhouses have gabled roofs, but more recent projects have also included flat roofs.



# TOWNHOUSE



*Arlington Heights*



*Lyon Park*



*Penrose*



*Leeway Overlee*



*East Falls Church*



*Ballston - Virginia Square*

**Open Space:** The townhouses surveyed have a range of front yard open space configurations. Some townhouses maintain individual front yards, while others are located closer to the street, resulting in some landscaping. Other townhouses surveyed share common open space.

**Parking:** Townhouses surveyed generally have private parking for the resident, either in the form of a private garage or a dedicated parking space in a surface parking lot.

**Trees:** Many townhouse properties surveyed have street trees in the front, sometimes supplemented with smaller, flowering trees in the front setback. Unless there is shared open space, townhouses generally do not have large maturing trees in the rear due to a preference for surface parking or the presence of trees in front of a neighboring townhouse on the same block.

**Orientation of Buildings:** The townhouses surveyed either face out onto a street – usually a smaller neighborhood street but sometimes a larger four-lane street – or face inward, either toward a series of private internal streets or along the edge of a shared surface parking lot.

**Condition:** Many older townhouses surveyed are maintained to reflect the original brick design of the building. Newer townhouses surveyed generally are three stories tall, larger than older, two-story townhouses.

**Architectural Features:** The townhouses surveyed possess a range of unique architectural features, including bay windows, dormers, front door overhangs, front stoops, and balconies. The unit width is generally narrow between 18 and 25 feet, and depth is anywhere from 30 to 45 feet. Roofs are usually gabled. More-recent developments exhibit a greater variety of materials and architectural styles.

**Location:** The townhouses surveyed are grouped next to other townhouses, due to Arlington's requirement that townhouses must be in a series of at least three attached houses. In many instances, these townhouses line a street block or are within a single townhouse development centered around a surface parking area.



# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING

# TOWNHOUSE



*Barcroft*



*East Falls Church*



# TOWNHOUSE



*East Falls Church*

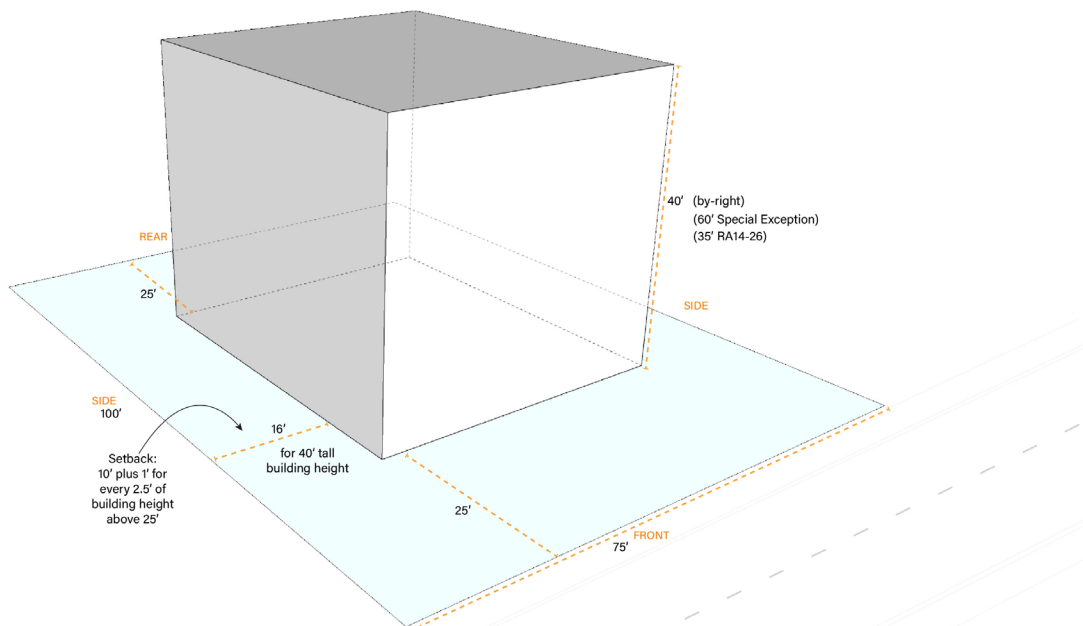


*Ballston - Virginia Square*

# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING

## SMALL MULTIPLEX

7,500 sq. ft. min. lot area



*This diagram reflects the current Zoning Ordinance standards for this dwelling type where they are allowed. The standards presented in these diagrams do not reflect the conditions of existing dwellings, which in many cases were built before these standards were adopted.*

### DESCRIPTION

A small multiplex (which is included in the Multiple-family use in Arlington's Zoning Ordinance) is, for the purposes of the Research Compendium, a low-rise multifamily residential building that contains three to sixteen housing units. They generally are smaller apartment or condominium buildings that are two to three stories tall.

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

**Open Space:** Most small multiplexes surveyed have common open space in the front or rear of the building. In some instances, the properties have more formal, fenced yards like a single-family detached house.

**Parking:** The small multiplexes surveyed possessed a range of parking configurations. Many of the buildings surveyed have a small off-street surface parking area; however, in some instances, some smaller buildings have no private off-street parking.

**Trees:** The small multiplexes surveyed often have trees on the property in the front yard between the building and the street.



# SMALL MULTIPLEX



*Bluemont*



*Aurora Highlands*



*John M. Langston / High View Park*



*Westover Village*

**Orientation of Buildings:** Most of the small multiplexes surveyed face out toward the street with a prominent front entrance and walkway that extends to a sidewalk.

**Condition:** Most small multiplexes surveyed are older residential buildings that have been maintained to showcase their original brick design. A small number of the buildings surveyed have been painted to create a distinctive building.

**Architectural Features:** Most small multiplexes surveyed have a distinctive front entrance with a canopy or an overhang. Multiplexes surveyed also generally have a unique window on the second floor located over the front entrance.

**Location:** Small multiplexes that contain three to four housing units were sometimes found in neighborhoods that also have single-family detached houses. The small multiplexes surveyed with more than four units were often located in neighborhoods with other small multiplexes.



# ARLINGTON'S EXISTING MIDDLE HOUSING SMALL MULTIPLEX



*Bluemont*



*Arlington Heights*



## SMALL MULTIPLEX



*Bluemont*



*Aurora Highlands*



*The Missing Middle Housing Study will explore how new housing types could help address Arlington's shortfall in housing supply and gaps in housing choices.*



**LEARN MORE.**

**[housing.arlingtonva.us/missingmiddle](https://housing.arlingtonva.us/missingmiddle)**



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