FORERUNNER FOUNDATION

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VIRGINIA FAMILIES FIGHT RADICAL REZONING, PROMOTE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Homeowners across Virginia have launched a new educational campaign to stop across-the-board rezoning that puts multiplexes smack in the middle of quiet, single-family neighborhoods.

"The first step to promote affordable housing is to stop luxury homebuilders from ripping down modest, single-family homes and replacing them with gigantic townhouses that cost multiples of what they are tearing down," according to Jerry Cox, Managing Director of the Forerunner Foundation, an Arlington, Virginia, based nonprofit. "We have seen plenty of affordable homes torn down, but not a single new one built."

"It is not just a matter of missing the stated goals," Cox added. "Blanket up-zoning will be disastrous because local governments promote high-density projects where the local infrastructure cannot handle it."

Forerunner's newest project, Alternative Zoning for Affordable Housing or "AltZoning," will support lawsuits in Arlington, Alexandria and Charlottesville, where city officials broke state laws that required them to consider the practical impact new high-rises will have on a long list of community concerns. Judges in the Northern Virginia cases recognized that it would be improper for them to preside over the zoning case and recused themselves. The state Supreme Court appointed Judge David S. Schell, a retired Fairfax County judge who had no conflict of interest. Schell voided Arlington's new zoning ordinance last year and will hear testimony in the Alexandria case by mid-2025. By contrast, Judge Claude Worrell continues to preside over the Charlottesville challenge despite plaintiffs' demand that he recuse himself, in part because his wife serves on a City commission and has vehemently opposed the homeowners.

"Like the Arlington County Board, the Charlottesville City Council also broke state laws when they failed to give their voters proper notice and skipped statutorily required studies concerning utilities, sewage capacity, traffic congestion, fire protection, and other quality-of-life impacts," Cox explained. "The courts should send them back to the drawing board to craft selective zoning changes that will serve middle- and lower-income home buyers, not wealthy real estate developers."

The Forerunner Foundation, founded in 2005, is a nonprofit public research and education organization, dedicated to forward-thinking public policy.

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