

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Fairfax:

County Approves New Definition of Home Additions

Fairfax Supervisors voted to close a loophole that allowed huge McMansions to be built as an “addition” to an existing property foundation.



Building officials stated that they were receiving three additional permit applications per week that were in fact entirely new homes built on existing foundations. By calling this construction an “addition,” the property would not be subject to the same number of inspections and code requirements as needed for a new home.

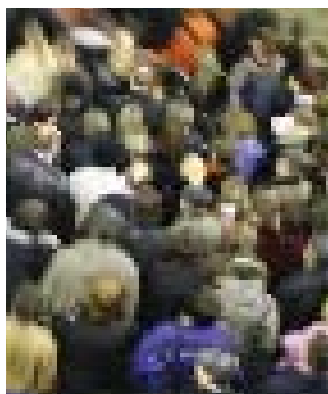
Now, in order to be called an addition, the new construction must not exceed 100 percent of the existing above grade square footage and no more than 50 percent of the existing structure may be demolished. All larger construction projects must meet the standards for a new construction dwelling.

Officials cited the move as having an added benefit for homebuyers. Often these properties are marketed as new construction, though they feature an old foundation and are tied to existing – and often inadequate utility connections.

Strike Teams Formed to Combat Overcrowding

Fairfax officials announced the formation of two strike teams to crack down on violations of the county’s overcrowding ordinances. The county also will seek to prosecute landlords who are profiting from repeatedly violating zoning, building and safety ordinances.

The teams are responsible for inspecting residential properties suspected to have violations. Recent complaints have included a Great Falls home divided into five apartments, Alexandria properties featuring two full kitchens and a Herndon dwelling used as a boarding house.



The strike teams are composed of zoning, building, health and fire code inspectors. Police officers, sheriff’s deputies and county attorneys are also supporting the teams’ efforts.

Residents can report suspected violations at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/striketeam.

Alexandria:

City Revives Moderate Income Homeownership Program

As part of its FY 2008 budget, the Alexandria City Council has approved funds to reinstate the Moderate Income Homeownership Program (MHIP). This program offers up to \$30,000 to first-time homebuyers that live or work in Alexandria. The funds will be available for settlements scheduled after July 7.



To qualify, applicants must submit an application, complete the city’s homebuyer education program, and receive a homebuyer training certificate. It is important that these requirements be met before writing a purchase agreement. Purchasers must devote at least \$3,000 of their personal funds to either settlement costs or the down payment, and the purchase price of the home cannot exceed \$399,600.

Due to overwhelming demand for the program’s funds, the MHIP had been suspended since December 2006. Applicants that were unable to participate in the program during that time are encouraged to contact the city at 703. 838. 4622 to check on the status of pending applications.

Arlington:

County Adopts Utility Tax to Fund Energy Conservation

Arlington County Board has approved implementation of a residential electricity and natural gas utility tax of no more than \$3 per month for each utility. The revenues will be deposited into the county’s environmental sustainability fund, which will be used to educate the public on reducing energy consumption.

The county will exempt from taxation the first 400 kilowatt-hours of electricity and 20 cubic feet of natural gas from taxation. It is estimated that half of the county’s households fall at or below these levels and would not be subject to the tax.



Previously, Arlington had imposed a utility tax only on commercial properties. Other Northern Virginia jurisdictions charge residential utility taxes ranging from \$2.25 to \$5 per month.