

# Draft Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan



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## Executive Summary:

Fairfax County is a great place to live and to do business. However, a lack of housing options is putting the County's well-being and future prosperity at risk. One in five renters in the County pay more than 50 percent of their income for housing, requiring them to make difficult choices among what necessities they are able to afford. In the next 15 years, over 18,000 new housing units will be needed for households earning less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income. These are just two examples that illustrate the need for more price-appropriate housing in Fairfax County.

Without a sufficient supply of housing—affordable to individuals and families all along the income spectrum—Fairfax County will not be able to reach its full economic development potential and remain a first-class community. The Fairfax County community has come together in recent years to develop the *Strategic Plan to Facilitate the Economic Success of Fairfax County* to support a strong economic development strategy, and the *One Fairfax Policy* to support inclusivity and shared prosperity. This **Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan** (the Plan) marks a continuation of Fairfax County's emphasis on building and maintaining a vibrant, resilient community.

The Board of Supervisors requested the Plan and it was developed by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) to address the significant need for price-appropriate housing options for current and projected residents of Fairfax County. **Phase 1** of the Plan identifies 25 short-term strategies that can be implemented without major policy changes or significant sources of new revenue to start the process of creating more housing options for future and current County residents and workers. **Phase 2** of the plan, to be developed subsequent to Board approval of Phase 1, will include longer-term strategies for developing new tools, policies, and resources to support the production, preservation and access to housing that is affordable to all who live and work in our community.

This document accomplishes Phase 1 of this communitywide effort – 25 strategies that represent near-term, measurable action items that will have a significant impact. They are organized under four broad categories:

- **Modernizing FCRHA / HCD Administration and Processes:** making existing processes more efficient, using existing resources more innovatively, and leveraging partnerships to support the development and preservation of the continuum of affordable housing
- **Land Use and Zoning Tools:** identifying ways to use land more creatively to build partnerships and expand housing options
- **Funding Sources and Uses:** deploying existing resources more efficiently and focusing existing efforts on those most in need
- **Housing for Vulnerable Populations:** ensuring the continuum of housing options through making affordable and accessible housing options available for persons with disabilities, seniors, and extremely low-income individuals and families, including those transitioning from homelessness

These strategies are immediate steps that can be taken to address the need for more price-appropriate housing in one to two years. It is clear, however, that Phase 2 of the Plan – a long-range implementation and resource plan – will be necessary to address the 62,184 new housing units that will be needed in Fairfax County in the next 15 years. The market, alone, will not produce the necessary housing options for Fairfax County's future.

The Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development and the Fairfax County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee are proud to share Phase 1 of the Fairfax County Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan.

## Why a Strategic Plan for Housing?

Fairfax County is an extraordinary community with an exceptionally strong local economy and high quality of life. The median income for a household of four is \$110,300, making it one of the highest-income areas in the country. However, in a county of approximately 1.2 million people, thousands and thousands of households are living paycheck-to-paycheck due in large part to severe lack of price-appropriate housing. “Price-appropriate housing” means housing that costs 30 percent of the household’s annual gross income or less. In other words, all households in Fairfax County, regardless of income, should have a variety of housing options they can afford.

Fairfax County’s reputation as an exceptional place to live, and its position as a place where businesses want to locate and stay, is threatened by the lack of price-appropriate housing for all of its residents and workers. When everyone has access to housing that is affordable for them:



Positive outcomes are more likely for families and children, including better educational outcomes for children and better health outcomes for people of all ages<sup>1</sup>

People have better prospects for upward economic mobility and self-sufficiency



Employers can hire workers who are able to live close to where they work, and there is less congestion on our roads

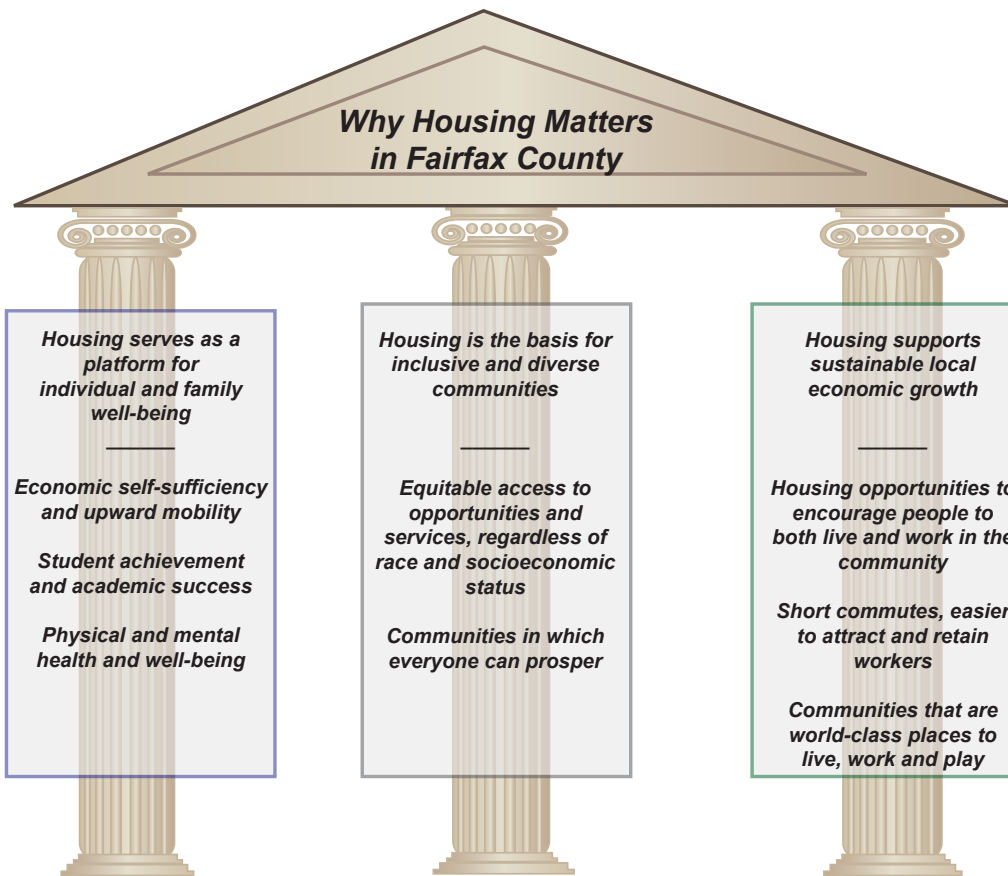
Persons with disabilities have access to housing that is appropriate for their needs and the elderly are more able to age in place



Simply put, Fairfax County is at a crossroads. Wage growth is not keeping pace with the cost of and demand for housing and families, particularly those that would be considered low- or moderate-income, are falling further and further behind. The economic viability of Fairfax County is at stake, as evidenced by Fairfax County’s 2015 *Strategic Plan to Facilitate the Economic Success of Fairfax County*. Furthermore, the lack of a range of price-appropriate housing in the county hinders the full implementation of the county’s *One Fairfax* policy, which calls for equitable access to communities of high-opportunity.

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Brennan, Maya, Lisa Sturtevant and Patrick Reed. 2014. *The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Education*. Washington DC: National Housing Conference; and Viveiros, Janet, Mindy Ault and Nabihah Maqbool. 2015. *The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health: A Research Summary*. Washington DC: National Housing Conference.





## How Housing Supports the County’s Plan for Economic Success

Housing affordability is critically important for ensuring that businesses want to locate to Fairfax County and then stay here. The Economic Success plan lays out six broad goals to maintain, diversify, and enhance the strong and vital Fairfax County community in order to sustain and grow our economic prosperity:

1. Further Diversify our Economy
2. Create Places Where People Want to Be
3. Improve Speed, Consistency and Predictability of the Development Review Process
4. Invest in Natural and Physical Infrastructure
5. Achieve Economic Success through Education and Equity
6. Increase Agility of County Government

Housing is an important element in every single goal. When advocating as a community for more price-appropriate housing, we fail to effectively communicate why it is important. We fail to discuss its value; how it is the foundational element of economic resilience and competitiveness in local communities. How it improves the local tax base and stabilizes family units. How communities benefit from public investments; ensuring that opportunities for individuals and families of all income levels are available.



The Urban Land Institute reports that more than half of the large companies with more than 100 employees cite a lack of price-appropriate housing near their business as a significant challenge; and 58 percent of the companies claim to have lost employees due to burdensome commutes. By having housing that is affordable, employees are able to live where they work and support the local economy. In addition, having a larger pool of waged workers makes for a more attractive location for businesses to relocate, which in turn, improves the commercial tax base so that local government is less reliant on residential real estate property taxes. It's all connected.



It is time we start the conversation about the economic benefits of having price-appropriate housing in our communities. It is time to start showing that it is more than housing assistance; that it is a valuable economic resource that benefits us all. Price-appropriate housing is good for the local economy, improves the local tax base, stabilizes family units, allows workers to live where they work, and provides opportunities for individuals and families of all income levels. It is not just an issue for the lower-income and underserved populations - it benefits us all.

## How Housing Promotes Equity

In addition to the connection between housing and the county's economic success, price-appropriate housing is directly connected to the success of households at the individual level. National research bears out the correlations – having homes that are affordable correlates to better mental health, less stress for our children, more economic mobility; just to name a few examples. One connection that is particularly important in Fairfax County is the one between housing and the ability to ensure equitable access to communities of opportunity.



The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the Fairfax County School Board adopted the One Fairfax racial and social equity policy in 2017, to ensure all individuals in our community have an opportunity to reach their highest level of personal achievement. Stable, affordable and high-quality housing is the key to increasing access to opportunities and ensuring all residents can prosper.

As a community, we can agree that where a person lives – and the associated opportunities and services present in that neighborhood – should not be a leading determinant in the health of their family. In fact, a person’s ZIP code is a stronger predictor of his or her overall health than other factors, including race and genetics. And it’s not just life expectancy – access to care, access to health information, and quality of life are all affected by where one lives. Fairfax County policymakers, as well as affordable housing developers, have an opportunity to create a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to the planning for new housing that can play a role in driving socioeconomic integration, reversing racial disparity trends, eliminating institutional or structural racism, and ensuring that outcomes and opportunities for all people in our community are no longer predicted by where a person lives.

*In fact, a person’s ZIP code is a stronger predictor of his or her overall health than other factors, including race and genetics. And it’s not just life expectancy – access to care, access to health information, and quality of life are all affected by where one lives.<sup>2</sup>*

## Objectives of the Strategic Plan

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors requested the development of the strategic plan for housing in 2016, and the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) took primary responsibility for overseeing the development of the plan. AHAC led a communitywide effort that benefited from input from residents and employers through numerous public meetings, one-on-one conversations, and an online survey. More than five thousand members of our community contributed their voices to the plan over the past year. As a result, the plan reflects the shared desire to maintain and grow our extraordinary community.

There were several objectives for this strategic planning process:

- To create a **shared community vision** of how housing supports local economic growth and community sustainability
- To **quantify the housing needed** to accommodate future growth and support the County’s economic sustainability
- To develop **specific, measurable, and actionable strategies** for meeting Communitywide housing goals
- To identify the **program and policies, and specific funding sources**, that will be required to address housing needs in **5, 10, and 15 years even as we experience current housing shortages**

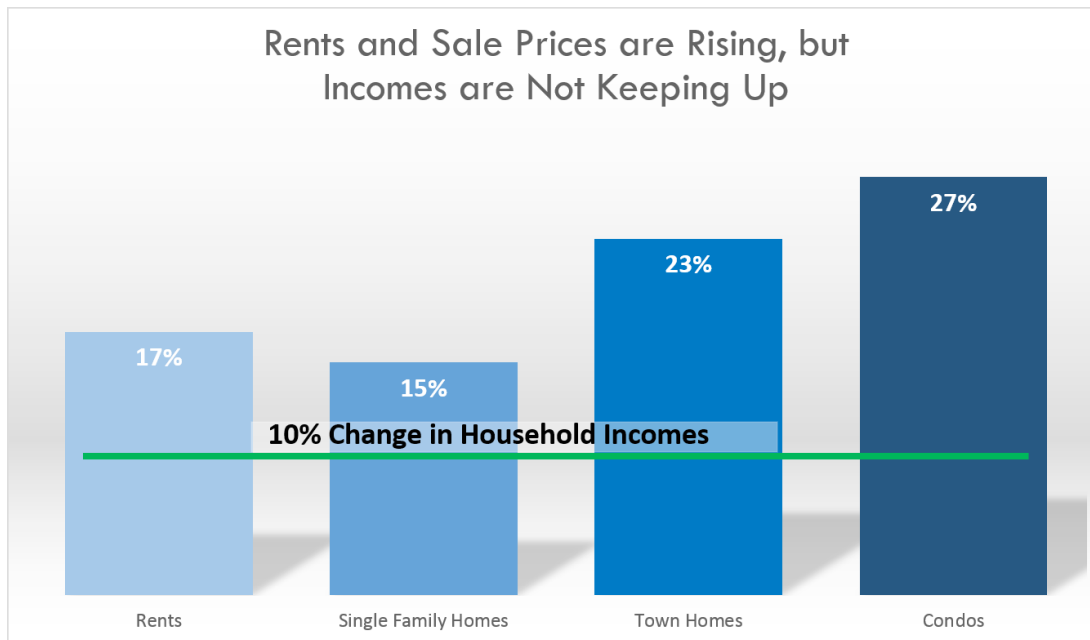
It is anticipated that this document will be the first step in a two-part process, identifying the need in our community, setting targets for housing production, and suggesting initial implementation steps that can be addressed in the next one to two years. The second, and more challenging step, will be identifying long-term implementation strategies, and the additional resources needed to carry out those strategies.

<sup>2</sup> Graham, Garth, Ostrowski, MaryLynn and Alyse Sabina. Defeating The ZIP Code Health Paradigm: Data, Technology, And Collaboration are Key.



## Housing Needs

More price-appropriate housing is needed in Fairfax County at a range of income levels, in both the rental and homeownership markets. The national post-recession recovery has been slow and has had a particularly strong impact on Fairfax County due to housing costs that have continued to rise even as incomes have stayed flat or risen moderately; and due to the region's dependence on federal government contracting. In fact, it has become increasingly difficult for many households to find housing they can afford in Fairfax County. Between 2010 and 2015, the average rent in Fairfax County has increased 17 percent and typical home prices for single-family homes, town homes and condominiums were up 15, 23 and 27 percent respectively. Over the same period, the average household income in the County increased by only 10 percent and for many low-wage workers incomes did not increase at all.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys, 2010 and 2015; MRIS

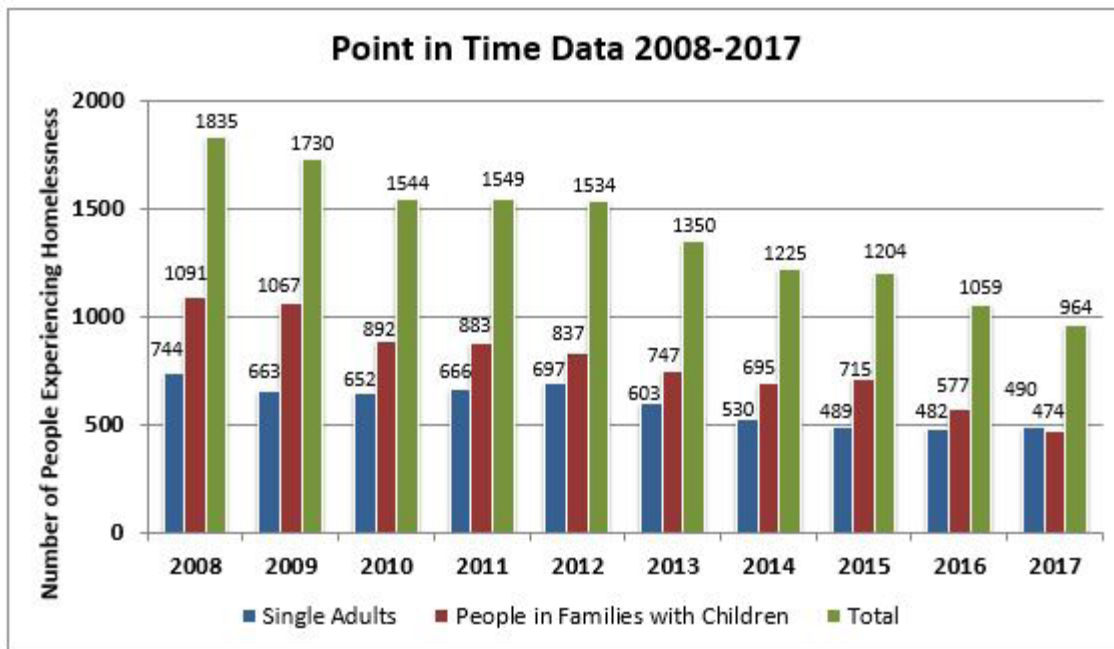
***There are more individuals in the County who are cost-burdened due to housing (115,000) than over 90 percent of the total populations of counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia.***

As housing costs, particularly rents, increase more than incomes, households find themselves more likely to be cost-burdened. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines “cost-burdened” as any household that spends more than 30 percent of household income for mortgage costs or gross rent. Households spending more than 50 percent are considered to be “severely cost-burdened.” In Fairfax County, according to the most recent American Community Survey, 44.3 percent of renters (more than 55,000 households) and 22.9 percent of homeowners (more than 60,000 households) in Fairfax County spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. This means that there are more people in the County who are cost-burdened (115,000) than over 90 percent of the total populations of counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia.



## Current Housing Needs for Vulnerable Households

While the cost-burden situation is problematic for any household that pays more than 30 percent of their income in housing costs, it can become a crisis for those households with extremely low-incomes or those with fixed incomes. For example, the lack of price-appropriate housing in the county has a direct connection to the cause of much of the homelessness in Fairfax County. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recognized this when they endorsed the “Blueprint for Success: Strategic Directions for the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community” in 2007. Much progress has been made since then in reducing the overall number of homeless households in our community and yet our most vulnerable residents continue to be at risk of housing instability and homelessness. On the night of the January 2017 Point in Time count, nearly 1,000 people in Fairfax County were homeless<sup>3</sup>. Low incomes and expensive housing are the main reasons for homelessness.



In addition to those households that are experiencing homelessness, more than 70,000 Fairfax County residents have a disability. Data shows that individuals with disabilities are much more likely to have extremely low-incomes and often face a compounded problem - finding housing that is price-appropriate AND has the accessibility features they need to live comfortably in their homes. Similarly, our elderly neighbors, many of whom have worked in Fairfax County throughout their careers and have contributed to their communities and the local economy, are having difficulty affording their homes on fixed incomes. Compared to all households in Fairfax County, a larger proportion of households with at least one person who is 75 or older have very low-incomes. Elderly households present the second greatest need for more affordable housing, behind small family households and singles. As housing costs increase, more senior households will likely become cost burdened or more cost burdened, since many elderly households have relatively fixed incomes.





## Current Housing Needs for Low- and Moderate-Wage Workers

Individuals and families with the lowest incomes face the greatest challenges finding housing they can afford. These households include many workers who are essential to the Fairfax County community. For example, a typical retail salesperson in the County earns less than \$30,000 per year. Restaurant workers, housekeepers, childcare providers, home-health aides, bus drivers and security guards in Fairfax County also have an average income of around \$30,000<sup>4</sup>. Working households earning \$30,000 per year can only afford to pay \$750 per month for housing, but the average rent in Fairfax County is more than \$1,700<sup>5</sup>.

### Many public sector workers who serve the Fairfax County community cannot afford to live here.

The average monthly rent in Fairfax County was **\$1,764** in 2015.  
You need an income of at least **\$70,560** to afford the typical rent.



#### Teacher Starting Salary - \$47,046

Would need to work 11 years before earning enough to rent the average one bedroom unit.



#### Police Officer Starting Salary - \$50,265

Would need to work 5 years before earning enough to rent the average one bedroom unit.



#### Public Health Nurse Starting Salary - \$51,254

Would need to work 6 years before earning enough to rent the average one bedroom unit

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey; Economic, Demographic and Statistical Research; Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services

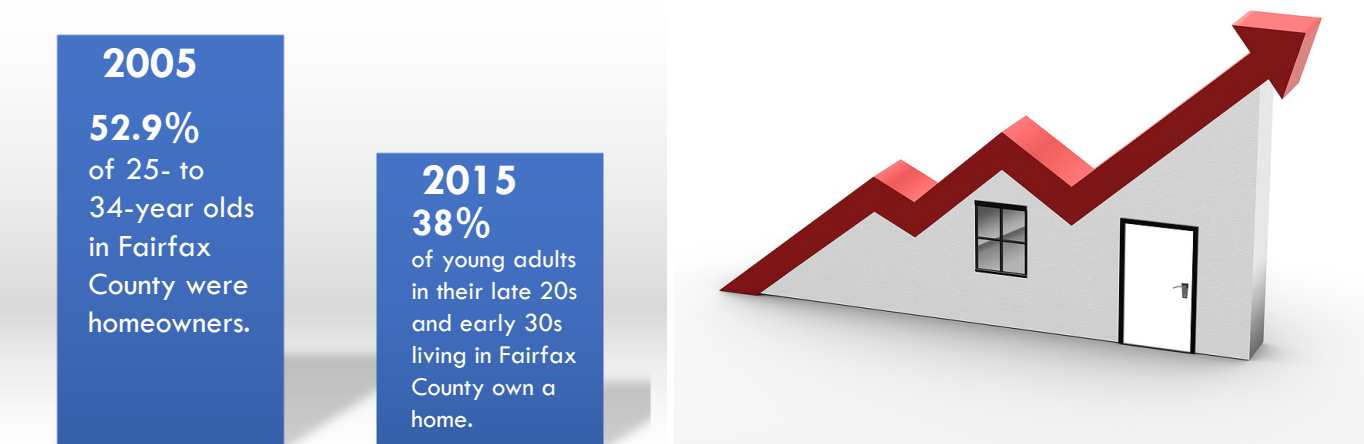
These workers are a critical component of our local economy and they deserve to have an opportunity to live and work in Fairfax County. What happens when working families earning low wages cannot find housing they can afford? In many cases, they live in overcrowded housing or commute to Fairfax County from other jurisdictions. Overcrowded housing continues to be a critical challenge in Fairfax County, with a total of 4,640 households overcrowded (1.01-1.5 people per room), and nearly 1,900 households severely overcrowded (more than 1.51 people per room). The majority of overcrowded households include at least one child and have incomes below 50 percent of Area Median Income (AMI). Given the prevalence of children in overcrowded households, families in our community may be “outgrowing” their housing units, but at the same time are unable to afford a larger home they can afford.

*The majority of overcrowded households include at least one child and have incomes below 50 percent of AMI.*

## The Challenge of Homeownership

In addition to the difficulty in finding price-appropriate housing options in the rental market, increasingly, high housing costs in Fairfax County burden households with middle and higher incomes and put homeownership opportunities out of reach. Households with higher incomes occupy many of the homes that would be affordable to low-income households. For example, 67 percent of the owned or for-sale housing stock that would be affordable to very low-, low- and moderate-income households is occupied by households with income greater than is required to comfortably afford those units, indicating that homebuyers with lower incomes face intense competition for affordable homes from households with higher incomes.

Many workers, including Millennials and young families, find they are not able to afford to buy a home in our community. The ability of young households to purchase a home in Fairfax County has dropped precipitously over a ten-year period. In 2005, more than half of 25- to 34-year olds in Fairfax County (52.9 percent) were homeowners. In 2015, only 38 percent of young adults in their late 20s and early 30s living in Fairfax County own a home. Recent research has shown that the desire for homeownership among young adults is as strong now as it has ever been, but this cohort faces new obstacles—including rising debt and fewer affordable homeownership options—which are leading to delays in home buying<sup>6</sup>.



## Future Housing Needs

Our community already faces a deficit of more than 31,000 rental homes affordable to low-income individuals and families. Over time, the gap between the need and the supply will grow considerably without new approaches for expanded housing availability and affordability. Over the next 15 years, the County is expected to add more than 62,000 households, primarily working households<sup>7</sup>. These are household projections based on the County's analysis of recent growth and the capacity for residential development based on current land use and zoning. To support sustainable population growth and bolster our economy, it is important to think about how we plan for price-appropriate housing to address the current housing gap and to meet the needs of the growing workforce.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Thompson, Derek. 2016. Millennials: The Mobile and the Stuck. The Atlantic August 24.

<sup>7</sup> For background on the County's forecasts, see Demographics Reports 2016 County of Fairfax, Virginia, available online <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demogrph/demrpts/report/fullrpt.pdf>.

As our community grows—it will need to grow in order to ensure economic vitality and prosperity—the County will add workers and families all along the income spectrum. Based on projections from the County and the George Mason University (GMU), over the next 15 years, the County is expected to add:

- **4,591 extremely low-income households (income <30% AMI)**
- **8,443 very low-income households (30-50% AMI)**
- **5,588 low-income households (50-80% AMI)**
- **9,048 moderate-income households (80-100% AMI)**
- **11,929 households with incomes between 100 and 120% of AMI**
- **22,585 households with incomes above 120% of AMI<sup>8</sup>**

While housing production has been on the rise since the Great Recession, Fairfax County is not producing enough housing to close the existing housing gap and will not be able to meet future housing needs. The County would need to add 4,146 new units each year for 15 years to meet the 2032 target above, but the County issued building permits for only 3,720 units in 2004 at the height of building in the 1992-2016 period, before heading into the housing bubble. Without incentives or other changes that reduce the cost of building or removal of disincentives for building, the opportunity for the County to deliver more than 3,720 units in a single year seems unlikely.

These forecasts also suggest that over the next 15 years, there will be demand for 18,622 homes affordable to households with incomes below 80 percent of AMI (29.9% of total new homes needed). Given housing market conditions in the Washington DC region and in Fairfax County, it is challenging to build new housing with rents or prices that are affordable to households at this income range without some form of subsidy. There are several reasons why lower-cost housing isn't produced in our community:

- High costs of land and construction make it difficult to provide sufficient housing at more moderate prices and rents;
- Federal, state and local regulations add to the cost of building housing, and these added costs are passed along to residents in the form of higher rents and prices; and
- Opposition to new construction or increased density from existing Fairfax County residents results in too little housing being built, limiting supply and putting upward pressure on prices and rents.

The private market meets the demand for housing for higher-income households; however, housing for low-income households is difficult and expensive to provide. In order to develop new housing—or often to preserve existing housing—at rents or prices that are affordable to our community's low- and moderate-income residents and workers, it is necessary for there to be some type of subsidy, either a financial subsidy provided in the form of a low-interest loan, grant or tax credit, a subsidy in the form of reduced land costs, an incentive in the form of an increase in the allowable density, a reduction in development approval requirements—or all of the above.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix for details on methodology.



## Strategies to Expand Housing Options in Fairfax County

In order to ensure that our community remains vibrant and diverse, and that our economy is strong and resilient, we must take action to ensure that there is enough housing—of the right types and at rents and prices that are affordable—to support growth in the County’s workforce and broader community, and that current and anticipated housing needs are met.

Fairfax County’s Housing Blueprint was a first step in achieving this vision, as it has focused affordable housing policies and resources on serving those with the greatest need, including homeless families and individuals, persons with special needs, and households with extremely low-incomes. The overarching principle of the Blueprint is that home affordability refers to a continuum of income and ability. The research and outreach conducted as a part of this strategic plan has re-affirmed this principle and the four main goals of the Blueprint:

- 1. To end homelessness in ten years;**
- 2. To provide affordable housing options to special needs populations;**
- 3. To meet the affordable housing needs of low-income working families; and**
- 4. To increase workforce housing through creative partnerships and public policy**

To meet the full range of housing needs in our community, and particularly the housing needs of individuals and families who earn below 80 percent of AMI, it will be necessary for the County, the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA), non-profits, the faith community, and local businesses and employers to come together to find ways to help fill the gap between what it costs to build housing in our community and the prices and rents that our workers, seniors, vulnerable populations and others can afford.

In Fairfax County there already exists a range of policies, programs and partnerships designed to address the community’s needs as identified in the County’s Housing Blueprint<sup>9</sup>, examples of which include:

### **TO END HOMELESSNESS IN TEN YEARS**

- Administering the Bridging Affordability Program
- Providing a homeless preference in the FCRHA’s federal rental programs

### **TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS TO SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATIONS**

- Facilitating home repairs for older individuals to help them stay in their residences
- Providing affordable adult housing and assisted living facilities
- Providing state-funded rental assistance to persons with developmental disabilities
- Owning and managing 818 senior and specialized housing units

### **TO MEET THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME WORKING FAMILIES**

- Assisting individuals in crisis, to ensure they can maintain their housing assistance
- Owning and managing over 3,000 affordable multifamily rental units

### **TO INCREASE WORKFORCE HOUSING THROUGH CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC POLICY**

- Fostering the creation of affordable and workforce units by non-profit and for-profit developers
- Administering the First-Time Homebuyers Program to assist low- and moderate-income prospective buyers with information on homeownership and opportunities to meet with lenders

<sup>9</sup> The Housing Blueprint was created in the wake of the 2007 recession to focus affordable housing policies and resources on serving those with the greatest need, including homeless families and individuals, persons with special needs, and households with extremely low-incomes.

Phase 1 of the Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan contains 25 specific strategies Fairfax County can take within one to two years and with no new additional public resources to begin to produce and preserve more affordable and workforce housing. However, it is clear that in the mid- and longer-term, new and substantial resources will be required to ensure that all County residents and workers who want to live in the County—including those with the lowest incomes and the most vulnerable economic situations—can have access to safe, stable and affordable housing. These Phase 1 strategies are intended to be adopted as a full package of actionable steps; will require inter-departmental coordination and participation from the business and non-profit communities; and will set the groundwork for longer-term, more comprehensive strategies that will be detailed in the forthcoming Phase 2 of the Plan.

## **A. Modernizing FCRHA/HCD Administration and Processes**

Within the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA), there are opportunities to make existing processes more efficient and to use existing resources more innovatively to leverage partnerships, bringing non-local money to the County to support the development and preservation of housing. These recommendations involve modifications to existing procedures within HCD and the FCRHA, as well as a move towards re-positioning FCRHA assets to use them more efficiently.

**A1. Streamline the Housing Blueprint Application Process to Better Align with the LIHTC Application Process.** The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is the primary way that new affordable housing developments are financed and is a source of substantial non-local funding for new and preserved housing in Fairfax County. With small changes to its Housing Blueprint application process and with increased communication with the developer community, the County/FCRHA-supported projects can be better able to compete for LIHTC dollars to support the development of housing for low- and moderate-income working families in the County.

**A2. Maximize the Potential of FCRHA-Owned Properties.** The FCRHA has significant resources in terms of the land and properties it owns. While not all FCRHA assets can or should be re-positioned, the FCRHA should continue to evaluate which sites have the greatest potential for development/redevelopment at higher densities and with non-profit and for-profit developer partners. Potential redevelopment and expansion of FCRHA-owned properties offers opportunities for innovative public-private partnerships.

**A3. Plan for Reinvestment of Savings from the Refinancing and/or Maturing of Debt Service of Wedgewood and Crescent Properties.** As refinancing opportunities become available and/or the debt service on these properties is paid down, a strategy should be developed to determine how to reallocate eventual savings for other affordable housing priorities. Currently, nearly half of the amount in the County's Affordable Housing Fund ("Penny Fund") are allocated for debt service on Wedgewood and Crescent.

**A4. Develop a Plan to Expand Use of FCRHA Bonds.** The FCRHA has the authority to issue bonds to support the development and preservation of affordable housing. The FCRHA should create a more aggressive outreach program to better publicize FCRHA bond financing to support the goals of the community.

**A5. Examine the FCRHA's Deep Subsidy Programs to Better Align Resources to Serve Those Most in Need.** As federal resources remain constrained, it is important that the County is directing those resources to meet its overarching principles of ensuring a continuum of housing and to serve residents with the greatest needs. The FCRHA should review existing Federal housing preferences and evaluate how well existing programs meet residents' needs.

**A6. Incorporate the One Fairfax Policy into the FCRHA's Policymaking Process.** *One Fairfax* commits the County and Schools to intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services. As part of the FCRHA's regular consideration of policy and funding decisions, develop an equity lens that enables staff to evaluate how its recommendations meet the vision of *One Fairfax*.



## **B. Land Use and Zoning Tools**

There are many ways in which changes to land use or zoning, or new approaches to uses on certain types of land, could significantly increase the supply and availability of housing affordable to the Fairfax County workforce. The County is currently undertaking a comprehensive update of its Zoning Ordinance and there are also planning efforts underway for particular neighborhoods in the County (e.g. the Route 1 corridor). These recommendations build off the County's current and recent land use and zoning studies, and go further to identify ways to use land more creatively to build partnerships and expand housing options.

### **B1. Update the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Workforce Dwelling Unit (WDU) Programs.**

Both the ADU and WDU programs have been effective at generating new affordable housing in Fairfax County. However, there is a need for updating and revising both programs to respond to housing needs and current market conditions. As part of the Zoning Ordinance update, the County should work with a comprehensive group of stakeholders to make improvements to the ADU and WDU programs.

### **B2. Create Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse of Commercial Space for Affordable Housing.**

Housing created through the reuse of commercial buildings, or through the use of land currently zoned for commercial uses, can create more opportunities for mixed-income housing. The County should build off of the recommendations from the Office Building Repositioning and Repurposing Task Force and move forward to develop policy direction and a pilot for creating new housing options through adaptive reuse.

**B3. Develop a Preservation Strategy.** Preserving existing subsidized and “market affordable” housing is vital to meeting the needs of low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The County should develop a comprehensive strategy that includes principles and guidelines around affordable housing preservation.

### **B4. Streamline the Process for Public-Private Partnerships that Make Use of Publicly-Owned Land.**

Making vacant or underutilized publicly-owned land available for affordable and mixed-income housing is an important way to expand housing options without direct public financial subsidy. These public land projects necessarily involve public-private partnerships. The County should review the Public Private Education and Infrastructure Act (PPEA) framework and consider moving to a more streamlined process for public land projects that involve affordable housing.

### **B5. Incorporate Guidelines for Public Land into the Capital Improvement Program(CIP) Process.**

Co-locating housing with new and/or redeveloped public facilities is an effective way to create affordable housing options in mixed-use settings. The County's CIP process should be amended so an assessment of the appropriateness of co-locating housing is done in all projects involving building new public facilities or redeveloping existing facilities.

**B6. Modify the Accessory Dwelling Unit Policy.** Within the larger Zoning Ordinance update, the County should review the current requirements for creating accessory units. Working with a broad set of stakeholders, improve the accessory dwelling unit requirements to allow for the creation of more accessory units.

**B7. Explore Zoning Districts that Allow for “Missing Middle” Housing.** As part of the Zoning Ordinance update, identify zoning districts where flexibility in housing types would be appropriate. “Missing middle” refers to a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, etc.) compatible in scale with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living. Review other local jurisdictions’ policies on “missing middle” housing and explore options for Fairfax County.

**B8. Integration with the Zoning Ordinance Modernization Project.** In 2017 the Office of Community Revitalization and the Department of Planning and Zoning initiated an effort to modernize the County’s Zoning Ordinance to restructure it to make it more user friendly, and to prioritize key amendments for updating the Ordinance. Changes to the Ordinance might affect the ability to develop certain types of housing in specified areas of the County, and improvements to the Ordinance could enable more innovative housing preservation and development opportunities. The County should ensure that the preservation and development of affordable housing is considered during each relevant phase of the Zoning Ordinance Modernization process.

## C. Funding Sources and Uses

While the short-term strategies presented in this report do not include recommendations for dedicated funding for housing, it will be important in the mid- and longer-term to identify new resources to support housing development and preservation. In the short-term, there are ways the County and the FCRHA can deploy their existing resources more efficiently and to explore ways to shift certain resources to be used for those most in need. At the same time, the County should be planning for ways to identify new resources to support the development and preservation of affordable and workforce housing.

**C1. Preserve Existing Affordable Housing Resources.** Currently, Fairfax County has several resources that are dedicated to the acquisition and preservation of affordable housing, including the Housing Trust Fund and the Penny for Affordable Housing Fund. These are critical, local funding streams that allow Fairfax County to provide capital funding to private and nonprofit affordable housing developers. Given the expected demand for price-appropriate housing as the population of Fairfax County continues to increase, these resources must be maintained at current levels and should be considered for further expansion.

**C2. Create Guidelines for the Tysons Housing Fund.** The Tysons Plan recommended contributions from commercial development to a housing trust fund which would be dedicated to supporting affordable and workforce housing options in Tysons. The County should formalize guidelines for the use for these funds to ensure that they are used as efficiently as possible to serve low- and moderate-income workers in the Tysons area.

**C3. Assess a Commercial Contribution Policy.** The link between job growth and housing availability and affordability is clear. Commercial contributions to the Affordable Housing Fund can be an efficient way for employers to support housing development that benefits the workforce. The County should assess its current policy of commercial contributions and re-visit the countywide commercial linkage policy in transit-oriented development areas to determine whether a new commercial contribution policy should be adopted.

**C4. Explore Using Existing Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) Policies to Promote Housing Affordability.** TIF allocates future increases in property taxes from a designated area to pay for improvements within that area, which could include affordable housing. Explore the use of the county's existing authority to implement TIF and associated policies as a means to promote affordable housing development and preservation.

**C5. Dedicate Resources to Expand the Scope of Local Rental Housing Subsidy.** With the decline in Federal housing resources and, in particular, with insufficient Federal commitment to the Housing Choice Voucher program, Fairfax County needs to expand the scope of its local rental housing subsidy program, known as Bridging Affordability, to assist its lowest-income families find housing they can afford. The Bridging Affordability program should be re-focused on meeting the needs of people with disabilities and other special needs (including victims of domestic violence, and those experiencing homelessness) and should allow for "project basing" of subsidies in affordable rental units.

**C6. Provide Downpayment and Closing Cost Assistance.** Use proceeds from the sale of ADUs that are currently contributing to the Affordable Housing Fund to expand assistance to moderate-income first-time homebuyers in the County. In addition, look for ways to partner with County employers to expand employer downpayment assistance programs.

**C7. Review Options for Restructuring the County's Housing Trust Fund.** Evaluate the structure of the Housing Trust Fund in light of the processes, funding and procedures of local trust funds in neighboring and comparable communities. Develop a plan for moving forward on changes that will create an efficient and effective trust fund.



## D. Housing for Vulnerable Populations

As part of its commitment to ensuring that Fairfax County has a continuum of housing options, the community will continue to work to make affordable and accessible housing options available for persons with disabilities, seniors, and extremely low-income individuals and families, including those at risk of or transitioning from homelessness.

**D1. Expand Access to Housing Options for Persons with Special Needs.** Finding affordable, appropriate housing is a particular challenge in Fairfax County for persons with special needs, many of whom are in some types of crisis (including victims of domestic violence, and those experiencing homelessness) or have a disability that prevents them from attaining full employment. The County should make efficient use of existing resources to create housing options, including transitional housing where appropriate, and should develop a plan with partners, such as the Governing Board of the Fairfax-Falls Church Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness for connecting individuals with affordable and appropriate housing.

**D2. Support Aging in Place.** The vast majority of older adults would prefer to age in their homes. However, it can be increasingly challenging to maintain a home as mobility declines. Property taxes can also make staying in a home unaffordable. The County should support programs and services to help enable seniors to remain in their homes by providing education and outreach to residents and connecting residents with existing privately-run programs.

**D3. Facilitate Opportunities for Faith Communities to Develop Affordable Housing.** Houses of worship in Fairfax County—including churches, temples, synagogues and mosques—often have underutilized land that could be appropriate for housing, particularly housing for vulnerable populations. Working with regional partners, the County should increase education and awareness about opportunities for housing development on land owned by faith communities, and connect these communities with available technical and financial assistance.

**D4. Continue to Address the Efficiency of Fairfax County's Existing Homeless and Housing Supports Networks.** As the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness works with its Governing Board and community to establish new goals, and as the 10 Year Plan comes to an end, a broader focus on housing for all will be established in the Health and Human Services system. This focus will include housing for homeless, mental health and domestic violence. It is clear that additional housing resources are needed that provide solutions to some of our most vulnerable residents.