HOUSING

INTRODUCTION

Since 1975, there have been several significant trends which have shaped the character of housing in Fairfax County. The most dramatic trends have been those associated with the growth in the number of housing units and the increasing cost of housing in the County. The number of housing units in the County has more than doubled since 1970. This increase in housing units has been accompanied by a dramatic shift away from the almost exclusive production of single-family detached housing toward townhouse style units. Between 1970 and 1988, townhouses grew at a rate that was roughly twelve times greater than that for single-family detached homes. Despite this recent trend, 55 percent of all housing in the County is composed of single-family detached units.

Fairfax County is recognized as an area that has some of the highest housing costs in the nation. Much of the escalation in the cost of homes in Fairfax County has been attributed to the high costs of land and development. According to a recent survey by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, which included over 238,000 apartment units, Fairfax County had the highest median rent of all jurisdictions in the region. The median rent recorded was over $700 per month.

Recent market conditions and forces in Fairfax County have not been conducive to the production of a variety of housing types, offering a broad range of housing prices. Multifamily housing, either as rental apartments or as condominiums, has not been produced at a rate comparable to other housing types. As a result, the proportion of multifamily housing units to overall housing has declined. Single-family housing predominates, even in areas where higher residential densities would be appropriate, such as near transit facilities or in close proximity to employment and commercial areas. A possible reason for the imbalance between single-family and multifamily housing is the short supply of appropriate sites that are planned and/or zoned for multifamily development. The production of multifamily housing is also hampered by the high costs of land and construction which necessitate rents and sales prices that are not competitive with existing multifamily units in the market and are unaffordable to many who would desire this housing type.

Housing affordability is a growing problem for many residents of the County. A significant number of people in various circumstances cannot afford to rent or purchase a home. The high sales prices of homes often require down payments far exceeding what many young families can afford. Those working in lower-paying or entry level jobs are likely to experience difficulty in affording to buy or rent in the County. The gap in housing affordability can affect the ability of employers, including the County, to attract employees crucial to the health and safety of the community as well as to the area's economic growth and prosperity. The lack of affordable housing has been cited as a factor contributing to the current shortage of workers in the County's service sector.

The objectives and policies put forth below are designed to respond to the County's adopted goals and the following critical housing issues:

- Housing for sale or rent in Fairfax County has become increasingly unaffordable.
- Declining federal support has made it more difficult to meet the housing needs of low- and moderate-income households.
- Ensuring neighborhood stability and conservation will be of increasing importance to the County.

- There is only a limited supply of housing for special populations, such as the physically and mentally disabled, the homeless, and the low-income elderly.
- There has been and continues to be a shortage of sites for affordable housing.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS GOAL

Affordable Housing - Opportunities should be available to all who live or work in Fairfax County to purchase or rent safe, decent, affordable housing within their means. Affordable housing should be located as close as possible to employment opportunities without adversely affecting quality of life standards. It should be a vital element in high density and mixed-use development projects, should be encouraged in revitalization areas, and encouraged through more flexible zoning wherever possible.

COUNTYWIDE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

A key recommendation of the Fairfax County Affordable Housing Task Force (1986) was the need for an annual numerical production objective to signify the commitment of the County and its citizens to provide affordable housing. This objective should increase public awareness regarding the issue of affordable housing and stimulate public and private efforts to create more affordable housing options and opportunities. Also, it should be a useful yardstick by which to measure the performance of the entire community in responding to this critical housing need.

The affordable housing objective set forth below is a community objective that involves the private, non-profit and public sectors. It will not be achieved by the County Government and Housing Authority alone. It is anticipated that the affordable housing units needed to meet this annual objective will be derived from federal, state and County housing assistance programs, commitments from developers, and other public and private efforts to create affordable housing.

Affordable housing, for the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, is defined as housing that is affordable to households with incomes which are up to 120 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), as determined periodically by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. One of the Fairfax County programs designed to produce affordable housing is the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program, which produces units that are affordable to households with incomes that are 70 percent or less of the AMI.[1]

For developments subject to the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program, notwithstanding specific Plan text or map provisions regarding unit type and/or density, the density range provisions of the Affordable Dwelling Unit Adjuster and the unit types permitted by the zoning district regulations in affordable dwelling unit developments shall apply. The Affordable Dwelling Unit Adjuster provisions state that the lower and upper end of the density ranges shall be increased by a maximum percentage based on the type of unit being constructed. The Zoning Ordinance provisions for affordable dwelling unit developments which include alternative unit types and reduced minimum yard and lot size requirements shall not necessarily be considered incompatible with

1 As an example, using the 2007 Area Median Income (AMI) of $94,500 (adjusted for family size), a household of four making 70 percent of AMI has an income of $66,150. Using the generally accepted guideline of paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for rent, an affordable rent for a two- or three-bedroom apartment would be $1,654 (including utilities). Using the generally accepted guideline of the purchase price of being 2.5 times a household's annual income, an affordable purchase price would be $165,375. For updated AMI information, please see www.fairfaxcounty.gov/rha/adu/aduprogram.htm or call the Department of Housing and Community Development at (703) 246-5101 or (703) 385-3578 (TTY).

adjacent development, provided that the flexibilities allowed in the Ordinance are accomplished on the subject parcel in a fashion that creates compatible transitions to adjacent developments.

Workforce Housing is an initiative of Fairfax County to encourage more affordable housing in the County's high-density Mixed-Use Centers, including Tysons Corner Urban Center, Transit Station Areas, Suburban Centers, and Community Business Centers. Workforce Housing units are typically smaller in size than market rate units and are targeted to households with incomes above those required by the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program.

For the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, Workforce Housing is defined as rental or for-sale housing that is affordable to households with specified maximum income limits, adjusted for household size. Workforce Housing units provided in for-sale developments in all construction types or in rental developments in steel and concrete construction[2] should be affordable to households with income up to and including 120 percent of the AMI, adjusted for household size. Workforce housing units in rental developments in wood and masonry construction[3] should be affordable to households with maximum income limits of up to and including 100 percent of the AMI, adjusted for household size. Workforce units should be divided into groupings or tiers that are affordable to households with various maximum income limits from up to 80 percent of AMI to up to 120 percent of AMI, adjusted for household size, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the Housing Section.

A Workforce Housing Program within the Zoning Ordinance should contain provisions regarding the production, control and administration of proffered Workforce Housing units. The provisions should be similar to those of the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program. Until such time as the Workforce Housing Program provisions of the Zoning Ordinance are in place, proffered Workforce housing units should be administered and controlled under interim guidelines generally comparable to those of the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program.

Objective 1: **The County should increase the supply of affordable housing units each year by an amount that is equal to at least 12 percent of the total housing production in the County for the previous year. These units should serve the full range of incomes of households needing affordable housing and should include units for the disabled and handicapped.**

Policy a. In cases where additional intensities can be supported by existing or planned infrastructure and public facility systems, provide bonus densities in exchange for affordable housing. Affordable housing can be in the form of housing units, free land dedicated to the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, or in limited circumstances, cash contributions to the Housing Trust Fund.

Policy b. Expand affordable housing in the County through the application of the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program, as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy c. Ensure Workforce Housing is provided in the County's Mixed-Use Centers, including Tysons Corner Urban Center, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers and Transit Station Areas, where the Areas Plans envision mixed-use or high-density residential development above the baseline recommendation for

2 I.e. Building Construction Types 1, 2, 3 & 4, as specified in the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.
3 I.e. Building Construction Type 5, as specified in the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

development and offer a bonus incentive for the production of Workforce housing. The expectation is that in such areas Affordable Dwelling Units and/or Workforce Housing will constitute a minimum of 12 percent of all residential units in all building construction types. For further guidance, see the Guidelines for Provision of Workforce Housing in the Housing Section Appendix 1.

Policy d. When considering development proposals, residential rezonings should not be approved above the low end of the Plan range unless an appropriate commitment of land, dwelling units, and/or a cash contribution to the Housing Trust Fund is provided. For further guidance, see the Criteria for Assignment of Appropriate Development Intensity included as a part of the Appendix to Countywide Land Use.

Policy e. Capitalize the Housing Trust Fund through private contributions and general revenue, so that it can be used as a mechanism to fund the development of affordable housing.

Policy f. Encourage affordable housing as a development option for infill sites, particularly in commercial areas and near employment concentrations.

Policy g. Give priority for the use of County and other government-owned buildings and land as sites for the provision of affordable housing.

Policy h. Promote and facilitate innovative site design and construction techniques, as well as encourage the use of manufactured housing and manufactured housing components, when aimed at providing affordable housing.

Policy i. Support the efforts of the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority in producing a portion of these affordable housing units through the provision of County resources and the approval of suitable housing sites.

Policy j. Encourage and facilitate home sharing as one mechanism for lowering housing costs.

Policy k. Encourage universal design in the development of affordable housing.

The expanding employment base in the County is one of the factors which creates the need for housing. Forecasts are that jobs will continue to grow at a rate which is higher than that for future housing production. This implies continued pressure on the housing market and an excess of demand for available units. There will be a need to increase the supply of housing in the County in response to this demand.

Prices of new homes and the rents of new apartments are directly related to allowable density. Higher densities can help to support affordability. Determining acceptable locations for higher density residential development will be necessary as part of a strategy to provide more affordable units. The County is committed to both closing the gap between the demand for and supply of affordable housing (as defined in the Glossary) and promoting the location of affordable housing throughout the County.

Objective 2: The County should encourage the provision of affordable housing (as defined in the Glossary) in all parts of the County.

Policy a. Expand housing opportunities in or near Mixed-Use Centers as a way of providing the opportunity for persons employed in the County to live near their jobs.

Policy b. Promote the development of multifamily housing in both Mixed-Use Centers and existing residential areas, as appropriate, in an effort to diversify the housing stock and expand lower cost housing options. For additional guidance, refer to the Locational Guidelines for Multifamily Residential Development contained in the Appendix to Countywide Land Use.

Policy c. Promote affordable housing opportunities throughout the County, particularly in areas where existing supply is low.

Policy d. Encourage the creation of accessory dwelling units as a means of increasing the supply and distribution of affordable housing.

As the County matures, there will be an increasing need to preserve and enhance older residential communities. It will be important to protect existing residential areas from the encroachment of commercial development and the impacts of institutional holdings and uses. The compatibility of infill development will also be of increasing concern. In cases of neighborhood deterioration, this may entail taking actions to promote residential redevelopment and/or revitalization where appropriate.

Objective 3: The County should conserve stable neighborhoods and encourage rehabilitation and other initiatives that will help to revitalize and promote the stability of older neighborhoods.

Policy a. Improve and maintain existing housing and neighborhood quality by upgrading substandard housing and improving physical community facilities (e.g., streets, sidewalks, lighting) in existing neighborhoods.

Policy b. Maintain housing quality in existing neighborhoods and preserve neighborhood stability through the abatement of “spot” blight.

Policy c. Facilitate improvement and maintenance of existing neighborhoods by initiating community development programs, in communities where needed, with as little displacement as possible; and incorporating affordable housing units, including universally designed units, as part of all major housing rehabilitation efforts.

Policy d. Retain existing below market rental housing through acquisition, rehabilitation assistance and other subsidies.

Policy e. Facilitate the retention of existing mobile home parks which are identified in the Area Plans as appropriate for mobile home park use. For additional guidance, refer to the Guidelines for Mobile Home Retention contained in the Appendix to Countywide Land Use.

Over the years, the County has responded to the housing needs of low- and moderate-income families through a variety of housing assistance programs. Assisted housing programs offer one means of providing affordable housing. The programs limit the amount of rent charged and the eligibility of occupants based on income. These limits are a condition for the provision of financial

assistance from federal, state or local sources. For a list of programs that are defined as assisted housing for the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, see the Glossary. Funding from the federal government has dropped sharply in recent years and the responsibility for providing new assisted housing has shifted to state and local governments. The County has steadily increased its role in providing low- and moderate-income housing.

Despite this continuing effort, there remains a significant need for housing assistance in the County. In 1995, there were approximately 50,000 households who were eligible for housing assistance because their income was 50% or less of the County median income. County efforts to meet the housing needs of low- and moderate-income families have been severely hampered in recent years by the sharp decline in federal housing funds that are available to localities. The decline in those funds that assist in the production of below market rate housing has had a particularly significant effect.

Objective 4: The County should maximize the use of federal and state housing assistance programs.

Policy a. Support the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority in its mission to plan, acquire, develop and maintain affordable housing using federal, state and county programs.

Policy b. Obtain the County's appropriate share of federal housing assistance which is allocated to the Washington region. Continue to support the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Fair Share formula.

Policy c. Use the Virginia Housing Development Authority's financial capability and other state housing assistance programs to address the housing needs of Fairfax County.

Additional efforts need to be taken to ensure that special population groups are able to live and work in Fairfax County. The escalating price and the limited availability of affordable housing is particularly onerous on those with special housing needs. Alternative housing arrangements such as group homes, homesharing, and accessory apartments can be appropriate tools for assisting these populations.

Objective 5: The County should increase the supply of housing available to special populations, including the physically and mentally disabled, the homeless, and the low-income elderly.

Policy a. Locate housing resources for special populations in all parts of the County as a way of improving accessibility to employment opportunities, County services, as well as cultural and recreational amenities.

Policy b. Facilitate the development of shelters and single room occupancy residences for homeless persons and families, as well as others in need of these housing options.

Policy c. Enforce fair housing laws and nondiscriminatory practices in the sale and rental of housing to all citizens.

Policy d. Promote multifamily housing for the elderly and the handicapped that is conveniently located to public transportation and community services.

Policy e. Encourage the creation of handicapped accessible housing units or units that can be easily modified for use by the disabled.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDELINES FOR PROVISION OF WORKFORCE HOUSING

It is a policy of the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County that Workforce Housing should be provided in the County's Mixed-Use Centers, including Tysons Corner Urban Center, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers and Transit Station Areas, where the Area Plans envision mixed use or high-density residential development above the baseline recommendation for development. The following guidelines should apply in the development of Workforce Housing.

1. Proposals for development that are above the baseline recommendation(s) in the Area Plans should include a minimum of 12 percent of all residential units in all building construction types as affordable housing (Affordable Dwelling Units and/or Workforce Housing) as defined in the Glossary of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan.

   For proposals that are exempt from the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program, the 12 percent policy should be met by proffered Workforce Housing. As an alternative, the 12 percent policy may be met by any combination of proffered Affordable Dwelling Units and/or Workforce Housing units. For proposals that are not exempt from the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program, the number of Affordable Dwelling Units and the Workforce housing units combined should be equal to 12 percent of the total number of residential units in the proposed development.

   Flexibility may be granted regarding the provision of Workforce Housing to the extent that consideration may be given to proposals whereby units available within the same Transit Station Area or Mixed-Use Center may be purchased by the developer of new construction and proffered as Workforce units to meet the requirements of these guidelines, as long as Guidelines 8 and 9 below are met.

2. The provision of Workforce Housing does not exempt an applicant from meeting the requirements of the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program, if applicable.

3. Workforce Housing should be subject to administrative requirements that are set forth in the Zoning Ordinance or interim guidelines generally comparable to those of the Affordable Dwelling Unit Program.

4. To encourage the provision of Workforce Housing, development proposals may realize a bonus of up to one additional market rate unit for each proffered Workforce Housing unit as long as a minimum of 12 percent of the total number of units proposed is affordable housing (i.e. Affordable Dwelling Units and/or Workforce Housing). In a mixed-use development, the bonus may be realized as nonresidential square footage that is equal to the square footage of the Workforce Housing provided.

Maximum Number of Units according to Plan Recomm.1	Percent of Bonus Density	Available Bonus Units	Total Number of Units	Number of Workforce Units Expected	Percentage Workforce Units out of Total Number of Units	Ratio of Bonus Units to Workforce Units
100	12%	12	112	14	12.5%	.85:1
100	13%	13	113	14	12.4%	.93:1
100	14%	14	114	14	12.3%	1:1
100	15%	15	115	15	13.0%	1:1
100	16%	16	116	16	13.8%	1:1
100	17%	17	117	17	14.5%	1:1
100	18%	18	118	18	15.2%	1:1
100	19%	19	119	19	15.9%	1:1
100	20%	20	120	20	16.6%	1:1

5. The maximum achievable bonus for the provision of Workforce Housing is 20 percent in terms of additional residential density (dwelling units per acre) or nonresidential intensity (floor area ratio).

6. In accordance with guidance in the Land Use section of the Policy Plan, for developments providing affordable housing, the additional density/intensity achieved with the inclusion of applicable bonus market rate units should not be counted toward the maximum allowable density (dwelling units) or floor area ratio (FAR) designated in the Area Plan recommendation(s). Building height above the maximum designated in the Area Plan recommendation(s) should only be considered if necessary to accommodate the inclusion of bonus market rate units.

7. In all cases, a minimum of 12 percent of all residential units should be Affordable Dwelling Units and/or Workforce Housing regardless of the degree to which the density available in the Plan recommendation(s) is achieved or the bonus provisions are utilized.

8. Workforce Housing should meet the following minimum unit sizes:
   - Efficiency: 450 square feet
   - 1-bedroom: 600 square feet
   - 2-bedroom: 750 square feet

9. The size (in square feet) of the market rate units created with the bonus provision should be within 10 percent of the square footage of the Workforce Housing units with the same number of bedrooms.

10. Workforce Housing should be available to households of varying income levels up to 120 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) adjusted for household size, as determined periodically by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

1 Maximum residential Plan recommendation may be expressed as a density range or a floor area ratio (FAR). A FAR recommendation would need to be converted to a number of units to ensure the 12% affordable housing goal is met.

Workforce housing provided in "for-sale" developments of all construction types or in rental developments built in steel and concrete should be allocated to three equal groupings or tiers as follows:

- The first tier should be priced so as to be affordable to households making up to and including 80 percent of the AMI, adjusted for household size.
- The second tier should be priced so as to be affordable to households making up to and including 100 percent of the AMI, adjusted for household size.
- The third tier should be priced so as to be affordable to households making up to and including 120 percent of the AMI, adjusted for household size.

However, development proposals may voluntarily designate that more than one-third of the units be provided for households with maximum income limits below 80 percent of the AMI.

Workforce housing in rental developments in wood and masonry building construction types should be allocated to two equal groupings or tiers as follows:

- The first tier should be priced so as to be affordable to households making up to 80 percent of the AMI, adjusted for household size.
- The second tier should be priced so as to be affordable to households making up to 100 percent of the AMI, adjusted for household size.

However, development proposals may voluntarily designate that more than one-half of the units be provided for households with maximum income limits below 80 percent of the AMI.