

Meeting the Housing Needs of Workers in Fairfax County's Retail and Service Sectors

Elisa Gonzalez is a single mom in her early-30s who works full-time at Target in Reston, earning about \$26,000 a year (30 percent of Area Median Income).

She and her daughter, Ava, live in a one-bedroom apartment in Springfield. She pays \$1,120 a month in rent, which is more than half of her income. She needed a major car repair last month and is now a month behind on her rent. If she has to move, her daughter will have to change schools for the second time in three years. Elisa feels stressed nearly all the time about making ends meet.



The Retail and Service sectors are an important part of the Fairfax County economy. Having workers in these sectors is essential for have a variety of restaurant and shopping options in the County. There are nearly 150,000 workers in Fairfax County earning less than \$30,000 a year, including many in the retail, hospitality and service sectors.

There are ways the community can support these working families. Fairfax County offers Federal and local housing assistance to low-income working families but there is not enough help for everyone. Other ways to assist these families could include expanded financial assistance and the preservation and production of more housing that is affordable to lower-wage workers.

Discussion Questions

Do you think a cashier at Target or a Marriott housecleaner can afford to live in Fairfax County?

Do you think employers will locate businesses elsewhere if these workers cannot afford to live in the County?

Should the Fairfax community do more to enable these households to live and work in the County?

Note: The individual reflected in this story is fictional but is a representation of many actual residents in Fairfax County, based on an analysis of demographic data for the County.