

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 a retail store in Reston, earning about \$26,500 a year (30 percent of Area Median Income).

She and her daughter, Ava, live in a one-bedroom apartment. 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.



Retail Workers like Elisa are an important part of the Fairfax County economy. 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. These workers are essential for having a variety of restaurant and shopping options in the County.

Discussion Questions

Do you know families like Elisa's in your neighborhood? How do you think these low-wage households are able to afford living in Fairfax County?

What are some strategies that the community could adopt that would create more housing affordability for workers in the service industries?

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.