

# Affordable Housing and Equity: One Fairfax Policy and Considerations

## One Fairfax Policy

- Commits the county to intentionally consider equity when making policies, planning and delivering programs and services
- Involves community and stakeholder engagement, training and organizational capacity building, data analysis, collective planning and action, and shared accountability mechanisms
- Poses these core questions:
  - Who benefits and who is burdened by past and current actions?
  - How can burdens be mitigated and benefits more broadly shared

## One Fairfax Definitions

**Equity:** The commitment to promote fairness and justice in the formation of public policy that results in all residents – regardless of age, race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status or neighborhood of residence or other characteristics – having opportunity to fully participate in the region’s economic vitality, contribute to its readiness for the future, and connect to its assets and resources.

**Racial Equity:** The absence of institutional and structural barriers experienced by people, based on race or color that impede opportunities and results.

**Social Equity:** The absence of institutional and structural barriers experienced by people, based on other societal factors such as age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socio-economic status, neighborhood of residence, that impede opportunities and results

## Definitions

**Short-term:** Next several weeks

**Medium-term:** Within six months

**Long-term:** Within 1 to 2 years

## One Fairfax Areas of Focus Related to Housing Preservation

**Area 1:** Community and economic development policies and programs that promote wealth creation and ensure fair access for all people.

**Area 2:** Housing policies that encourage all who want to live in Fairfax to be able to do so, and the provision of a full spectrum of housing opportunities across the county, most notably those in mixed-use areas that are accessible to multiple modes of transport

**Area 6:** Community and public safety that includes services such as fire, emergency medical services, police, health, emergency management and code enforcement that are responsive to all residents so that everyone feels safe to live, work, learn, and play in any neighborhood of Fairfax County.

**Area 8:** Neighborhoods that support all communities and individuals through strong social networks, trust among neighbors, and the ability to work together to achieve common goals that improve the quality of life for everyone in the neighborhood.

**Area 9:** A vibrant food system where healthy, accessible, and affordable food is valued as a basic human necessity.

**Area 10:** A health and human services system where opportunities exist for all individuals and families to be safe, be healthy and realize their potential through the provision of accessible, high quality, affordable and culturally appropriate services.

**Area 11:** A quality built and natural environment that accommodates anticipated growth and change in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable and equitable manner that includes mixes of land use that protects existing stable neighborhoods and green spaces, supports sustainability, supports a high quality of life, and promotes employment opportunities, housing, amenities and services for all people

## Equity Lens Questions

### **Proposed Goal and Outcome(s)**

1. **The Proposal:** What is the policy, program, practice or decision under consideration?
2. **Desired Results:** What are the community-level conditions we aim to impact? What are the outcomes we want to achieve?
3. **Assumptions:** What are our beliefs and ideas about the issue, situation and people involved? How can we counter implicit bias?
4. **Analysis of Data:** What data do we have? What does the data tell us?
5. **Contextual Factors:** What factors might influence the proposal? What factors might the proposal influence? What factors are in and/or out of our control?
6. **Implementation:** Is the plan/policy/definition feasible? Adequately resourced? How can we think and act creatively to make "it" happen?
7. Has the proximity to available support services and infrastructure (sidewalk/trail system maturity, access to transit, recreation, child care, retail, healthy food, schools, community activities etc.) within a 10-15 minute walk been considered with the proposed policy/definition/program/strategy?

### **Considering Unintended Consequences**

1. **Strategies for Equity:** Who will benefit from this decision/plan/policy/definition? Who will be burdened by this decision/plan/policy/definition? What strategies will address vulnerability or build opportunity? How can we mitigate unintended consequences? Are there impacts in specific geographical areas of the County?
2. Are there different impacts in the short-, medium-, and long-term? *List potential unintended consequences with equity implications:*
3. Are there strategies in place, or that could be put in place, to mitigate the unintended consequences of this decision? How can we prevent or minimize harm so this decision does not increase housing inequity?

### **Evaluation and Community Engagement**

1. **Accountability:** How will impacts be documented and evaluated to see if anticipated outcomes are achieved? *List any potential evaluation processes or indicators:*
2. **Community Engagement:** How have communities affected by the proposal been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?

## Equity Issues/Implications Related to *Housing in General Nationwide and in Fairfax County*

From the [Becoming One Fairfax Presentation](#):

- Reports from the Northern Virginia Health Foundation, PolicyLink, and Urban Institute and our own analysis document variances in opportunity and vulnerability within Fairfax County and across the Northern Virginia and Metropolitan Washington regions.
- The most effective solutions must be place-based and system-focused and address the spatial inequities that constrain opportunity and ensure equitable access to services and resources that promote economic mobility.
- Disparities in Housing Today:
  - Homeownership Opportunities and Equity Gains
  - Continued Segregation and Exclusion from Communities of Opportunity
  - Greater Housing Cost Burdens
  - Higher Rates of Housing Instability and Threats of Eviction
- Examples of Equitable Approaches:
  1. Embed and institutionalize racial equity into all housing and community development strategies and plans
  2. Advance economic opportunity (address all aspects of a community)
  3. Prevent displacement of housing and small businesses
  4. Implement inclusionary housing policies so that people can live in high-opportunity areas
  5. Develop, support, and fund shared equity homeownership for mobile homes

### *Additional Reading:*

- [Getting Ahead: The Uneven Opportunity Landscape in Northern Virginia](#)
- [Racial Inequities in Fairfax County: 2011-2015](#)
- [Fairfax County Health and Human Services Needs Assessment 2019](#)
- [Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County](#)
- [Uneven Opportunities: How Conditions for Wellness Vary Across the Metropolitan Washington Region](#)
- [Embedding Racial Equity in Housing](#)
- [Healthy Communities of Opportunity: An Equity Blueprint to Address America's Housing Challenges](#)
- [Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity](#)

## Equity Issues/Implications Specific to *Preservation* Nationwide and in Fairfax County

From the [Creating a Preservation Framework: Matching Approach to Needs Presentation](#)

- Loss of market-rate affordable units - Fairfax County: lost 8,000 market affordable units (70% AMI) between 2002-2010
- In the region, nearly 7,500 committed affordable units will have federal subsidy restrictions expire within next 10 years
- **Physical Deterioration:** As a market-affordable or subsidized affordable property ages, there is insufficient investment in the property to maintain habitability, and the property is eventually removed from the building stock. This can result from insufficient cash flow from operations, poor management and/or intentional neglect.
- **Erosion of affordability:** via rent increase If rents in market-affordable properties increase faster than tenant incomes, eventually some rental units will no longer be considered “affordable,” despite no other changes to the property, building, or business model.
- **Value-add Investment:** In response to market demand from middle- and high-income rental properties, market-affordable or expiring subsidized properties may undergo light-to moderate rehabilitation to improve the property to be repositioned in the rental market and drive higher rents.
- **Redevelopment:** In areas where the market can support redevelopment, an owner may completely redevelop a market-affordable or expiring subsidized property, which can include a full rehabilitation, demolition and new construction, or a combination of both approaches. Such properties are generally targeted at the top of the market to offset the major investment in the property

From the [Affordable and Workforce Dwelling Units Programs Presentation](#):

- 2018: The affordability period expired for certain properties and the ADUs were no longer available at below market rents
  - Projected Number of Expiring ADUs: 2018: 113 units; 2019: 115 units; 2020: 81 units; 2021: 105 units

From the [Healthy Housing Presentation Summary](#) and [the slides](#):

- Good quality, affordable housing with access to services is the most cost-effective way to promote long term health and family stability.
- Definitions and values
  - Quality of life – improve quality of life through preservation strategies
  - Measurement – health outcomes as key metrics for measuring success of preservation
  - Methods – center equity in the development of strategies
- Livability at the micro and macro scale
  - Interior of homes – building code, code enforcement, and energy upgrades
  - Location – ensure location of homes promotes access to resources and limits exposure to hazards

From the [Affordable Rental Housing Preservation: The Basics](#) guide:

- The loss of stable affordable rental homes can mean upheaval in a neighborhood, displacement of long-time residents and a loss of the community’s traditional character — particularly in communities where rents are rising.
- Well-maintained rental homes that are affordable to low- and moderate-income households and others can contribute to neighborhood stability, combat the negative effects of [gentrification](#), and create or preserve diverse, mixed-income.
- Proximity to transit for affordable housing preservation can improve the quality of life of residents and the surrounding community
- Rental housing preservation is an important strategy for preserving income diversity in many settings, including:
  - high-cost neighborhoods where replacing lost affordable homes is often difficult and expensive;
  - gentrifying neighborhoods where escalating rents, demolitions, expiring subsidy contracts or conversions from apartments to condominiums threaten to displace low-income households; and distressed neighborhoods, where affordable rental homes are often at risk of loss to deterioration and where preservation can be part of a revitalization effort.
- Not every property can or should be preserved. Some properties are simply too physically deteriorated or financially unstable to be preserved.

From [Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity](#):

- Anticipate and prevent displacement of vulnerable residents, businesses, and community organizations.
- Great places with equitable access. A city with an equitable distribution of great neighborhoods full of strong amenities that provide equitable access throughout.

*Additional Reading:*

- [Northern Virginia Preservation Study](#)
- [Northern Virginia's Preservation Challenge: Trends, Threats and Opportunities](#)
- [Affordable Rental Housing Preservation: The Basics](#)