

## HOUSING

### INTRODUCTION

Fairfax County is an extraordinary community with an exceptionally strong local economy, high quality of life and higher median income compared to the national average. Because of these and other factors, and the demands on the housing market they help create, Fairfax County also has a long-standing challenge with housing affordability, especially for households with low- and moderate-incomes. Stable, affordable, high-quality housing is the key to increasing access to opportunities to ensure all residents can prosper and employers can have an array of workforce options. Fairfax County is committed to continuing to build and maintain a vibrant, resilient community that views housing as critical infrastructure and encourages development of housing affordability for all income levels. After significant community engagement and support, the Board of Supervisors adopted several policy documents that support the creation of a sufficient supply of housing appropriately priced for individuals and families throughout the county across the income spectrum. These include the 2015 *Strategic Plan to Facilitate the Economic Success of Fairfax County* to shape a strong economic development strategy, the 2017 *One Fairfax Policy* for racial and social equity to affirm county goals of inclusivity and shared prosperity for all county residents, and the 2018 *Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan*, to provide a housing strategy that meets the housing need for the production and preservation of housing affordability throughout the county.

Housing affordability is critically important to ensure businesses want to locate and remain in the county. By having housing that is affordable, employees are able to live where they work and support the local economy. Increasing the employment pool makes the county more attractive for businesses which, in turn, improves the commercial tax base and makes the county less reliant on residential real estate property taxes. The opportunity to obtain housing that is appropriately priced for every income level is integral to achieving the goal to maintain, diversify, and enhance the strong and vital Fairfax County community. Housing affordability in Fairfax County, as described in Fairfax County's Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan, is considered to be housing that is "price-appropriate" for any household, meaning that it is rental or for-sale housing that costs approximately 30 percent of a household's annual income or less, regardless of the household's income level. Affordable housing is price-appropriate rental housing at 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) and below and for-sale housing at 120 percent the AMI and below.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted the One Fairfax racial and social equity policy to ensure that individuals in the Fairfax County community have an opportunity to reach their highest level of personal achievement. The Board recognized that, in order to help residents reach their highest level of personal achievement, it is vital for them to have access to price-appropriate housing. When households pay more than 30 percent of their income in housing, they are forced to make difficult choices about how to afford other necessities, such as health care and transportation to employment. In order for Fairfax County to support a thriving community and promote equity, particular consideration is given to housing policies that encourage all who want to live in Fairfax to be able to do so, and to 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.

In addition to the connection between housing and the county's economic success, affordable housing is directly connected to the success of households at the individual level. Across the country, a person's ZIP code is a stronger predictor of personal overall health and life expectancy than are other factors, including race and genetics. Access to health care, access to health information, and quality of life are all affected by where one lives. However, where a household lives, and the associated opportunities and services present in that neighborhood, should not be a leading determinant of the health of the individual or family. Fairfax County is creating a comprehensive and

thoughtful approach to the planning for new housing that can play a role in driving socioeconomic integration, eliminating institutional or structural racism, and ensuring that outcomes and opportunities for all county residents are not predicted by where a person or family lives.

Especially since housing costs continue to rise as incomes stay flat or rise moderately, it is essential to ensure that price-appropriate housing affordable for all residents, regardless of income, is available throughout the county. When all residents have access to price-appropriate housing, positive outcomes are more likely, including:

- Better educational outcomes for children;
- Improved health outcomes for all ages;
- Neighborhood and school stability;
- Enhanced prospects for upward economic mobility and self-sufficiency;
- Greater opportunity for employees to live close to where they work and for employers to fill a range of job types;
- Decreased congestion on county roads;
- Reduced prevalence of housing crises, such as evictions and homelessness;
- Increased access to housing for persons with disabilities that is appropriate for their needs; and
- Increased opportunity for people who are seniors to age in place.

### *Housing Needs*

More price-appropriate housing is needed in the county at a range of income levels, in both the rental and homeownership markets, as it has become increasingly difficult for many households to find price-appropriate housing in the county. Individuals and families with the lowest income levels face the greatest challenges in finding affordable housing. The *Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan* identified a specific need for an additional 15,000 net new homes, affordable to households at 60 percent of the AMI and below, over the 15 years between 2019 and 2034. These households are critical members of the workforce and an essential component of the local economy. As such, it is essential to ensure availability of sufficient housing options that are price-appropriate so these essential employees have an opportunity to live in the same county in which they work.

Further, the lack of affordable housing in the county is a leading cause of homelessness. The Board recognized this when it endorsed the *Blueprint for Success: Strategic Directions for the Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in the Fairfax-Falls Church Community* in 2008. Much progress has been made since then in reducing the overall number of families and individuals experiencing homelessness in the county, yet vulnerable residents continue to be at risk of housing instability and homelessness.

In addition, price-appropriate housing must be made available to county residents who have a disability. Individuals with disabilities are more likely to have extremely low-incomes and often face a compounded problem - finding housing that is both affordable and that has the accessibility features needed to live comfortably in the home. Similarly, many seniors on fixed incomes, of whom many worked in Fairfax County throughout their careers and contributed to their communities and the local economy, have difficulty affording homes with necessary accessibility features.

Based on Fairfax County's Five-Year Consolidated Plan for Fiscal Years 2016-2020, the county faces a deficit of more than 31,000 rental homes affordable to individuals and families with low incomes. Over time, the gap between the need and the supply will grow considerably without new approaches for expanded housing availability and affordability. By 2032, the county is expected to add more than 62,000 households. These household projections are based on the county's analysis of recent growth and the capacity to accommodate residential development based on current land use

and zoning. To support sustainable population growth and bolster the Fairfax County economy, it is important to intentionally plan for price-appropriate housing to address the current housing gap and to meet the needs of the growing workforce.

In addition to the foregoing, the following critical housing challenges must be addressed by the goal, objectives, and policies set forth in the Housing Element:

- There continues to be an insufficient supply of price-appropriate rental and for-sale housing in Fairfax County for all income levels, including, in particular, affordable housing for persons with low- and moderate-incomes;
- Federal support has not increased at the same rate as the need, which makes it more difficult to meet the housing needs of households with low- and moderate-incomes;
- The expanding employment base in the county with a forecasted rate of job growth that is higher than that for future housing production puts pressure on the housing market and an imbalance between demand and available units;
- Preserving the stability of residential neighborhoods remains an important goal;
- There is a limited supply of housing for special populations, such as people with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities, families and individuals who are/were homeless, and seniors with low-income; and,
- There has been and continues to be a shortage of available land to develop for affordable housing.

### **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' GOAL**

Opportunities should be available to all who live or work in Fairfax County to purchase or rent safe, decent, price-appropriate housing within their means in accordance with the *One Fairfax policy* and *Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan*. Housing affordable for all income levels should be located as close as possible to employment opportunities while maximizing quality of life standards. The provision of affordable housing should be a vital element in high density and mixed-use developments should be encouraged in revitalization areas and mixed-use centers, and stimulated through flexible zoning wherever possible.

### **COUNTYWIDE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

Increasing the supply of housing in the county in appropriate locations while preserving existing residential communities will respond to the housing goal and challenges in the county. It is essential for Fairfax County to indicate a numerical production goal to signify the commitment to having price-appropriate housing that is affordable at all income levels throughout the county. This production goal, as noted in Objective 1 below and as further described in the *Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan*, should be communicated broadly and intentionally to increase public awareness regarding the need for housing affordability and to stimulate public, private and non-profit efforts to create more housing options and opportunities at all affordability levels. This metric should be used as a yardstick by which to measure the performance of the entire community in responding to this critical need for economic success.

Higher densities can help to support housing affordability as the prices of new homes and the rents of new apartments are directly related to allowable density. Determining acceptable locations for higher density residential development is necessary as part of a strategy to provide more units addressing a range of affordability. In addition, older, more affordable, residential communities will need to be enhanced and protected from the encroachment of new commercial development and redevelopment.

Infill development and redevelopment should work to avoid destabilizing or adversely affecting older residential neighborhoods. Efforts should be made to promote compatible residential

development and redevelopment and/or revitalization in mixed-use centers, where appropriate.

The county is committed to closing the gap between the demand for and the supply of housing that is affordable at all income levels, with special emphasis on providing housing affordable at 80 percent of the AMI and below throughout the county.

In Fairfax County, affordable housing below market rate is produced through a variety of programs that address varying levels of affordability. This may include a combination of methods including inclusionary zoning practices; Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC); federal, state and local housing financing and assistance programs; commitments from developers; and, other public, private and non-profit efforts to create housing across the spectrum.

Fairfax County's inclusionary zoning program is designed to produce affordable, price-appropriate housing below the Area Median Income (AMI). The inclusionary zoning program includes the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program and the Workforce Dwelling Unit (WDU) policy. The ADU program produces units that are affordable to households with incomes that are 70 percent or less of the AMI. The WDU rental program provides units at 80 percent of the AMI and below and the for-sale WDU program provides units up to 120 percent of the AMI. For developments subject to the 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 apply.

The county also responds to the housing needs of low- and moderate-income individuals and families through a variety of housing assistance programs. The programs determine the eligibility of occupants based on income and limit the amount of rent charged. These limits are a condition for the provision of financial assistance from federal, state or local sources. Funding from the federal government has leveled in recent years after sharp declines, although it has not kept pace with growing demand; as a result, 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.

Additional efforts also need to be taken to ensure that special population groups are able to live in the 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, home sharing, and accessory apartments can be appropriate tools for assisting these populations.

The following objectives and policies are essential to realize the Board of Supervisors' housing goal. These objectives, along with the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, the Workforce Dwelling Unit (WDU) Policies as set forth in Appendix 1 to the Housing Element, and the county's broader affordable housing development and financing efforts will guide the continued development of vibrant, resilient communities throughout the county while encouraging development of housing affordability for all income levels and furthering the One Fairfax Policy.

**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 price-appropriate housing and should include units that meet the needs of people with disabilities.**

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- 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, land dedicated to the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, or in limited circumstances, cash contributions to the Housing Trust Fund, with a strong preference for the development of actual housing units.
  - Policy b. Expand housing affordability in the county through the application of the Affordable Dwelling Unit program and Workforce Dwelling Unit policy, as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan, respectively.
  - Policy c. Ensure for-sale and rental Workforce Dwelling Units are provided in the county's Mixed-Use Centers, including Tysons Urban Center, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers and Transit Station Areas, or, for rental Workforce Dwelling Units, where the Areas Plans envision mixed-use or high-density residential development above the baseline recommendation for development. This policy would be applicable to stacked townhomes as well as multi-family dwelling units. For further guidance, see the Guidelines for Provision of Workforce Dwelling Units in the Housing Section Appendix 1.
  - Policy d. Do not approve residential rezoning applications 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 Residential Development Criteria.
  - Policy e. Capitalize the county's housing investment funds through private contributions and general revenue, so that they 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 co-location and/or development of housing that is affordable at 80 percent of the AMI and below.
  - Policy h. Promote and facilitate innovative site design and construction techniques, as well as encourage the use of manufactured housing and manufactured housing components.
  - Policy i. Support the efforts of the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority in producing a portion of 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 in non-federally subsidized homes.
  - Policy k. Encourage universal design and accessibility in the development of all housing types and at all affordability levels.
  - Policy l. Encourage commitments to green building practices in the development of all housing as recommended in the Environment element of the Policy Plan.

- Policy m. Report regularly to the Board of Supervisors concerning affordable housing production under this objective.

**Objective 2: The county should encourage the provision of price-appropriate housing affordable for all income levels in all parts of the county.**

- Policy a. Expand for-sale and rental housing opportunities in or near Mixed-Use Centers as a way of providing the opportunity for persons to live and work within the county.
- Policy b. Promote the development of multifamily and senior 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 Appendix 1 to the Countywide Land Use Element of the Policy Plan.
- Policy c. Promote housing opportunities at 80 percent the AMI and below throughout the county, particularly in areas where existing supply is low.
- Policy d. Encourage the creation of Accessory Living Units as a means of increasing the supply and distribution of housing affordability at all income levels.

**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.

**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. Seek to obtain the county's appropriate share of federal housing assistance which is allocated to the Washington region.
- Policy c. Use Virginia Housing's financial capability and other state housing assistance programs to address the housing needs of Fairfax County.

**Objective 5: The county should increase the supply of housing available to special populations, including people with intellectual, developmental, and physical disabilities, families and individuals who are/were homeless, and seniors with low- and moderate-income.**

- 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, medical services, and cultural and recreational amenities.
- Policy b. Facilitate the development of emergency shelters and permanent supportive housing for individuals and families who are/were homeless, 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 residents.
- Policy d. Promote multifamily housing for seniors and people with disabilities that is conveniently located to public transportation and community services.
- Policy e. Encourage the creation of accessible housing units or units that can be easily modified for use by people with physical disabilities.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **GUIDELINES FOR PROVISION OF WORKFORCE DWELLING UNITS**

It is a policy of the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County that rental and for-sale Workforce Dwelling Units (WDUs) should be provided in the County's Mixed-Use Centers, including the Tysons Urban Center, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers and Transit Station Areas, or, for rental Workforce Dwelling Units, where the Area Plans envision mixed use or high-density residential development, above the baseline recommendation. This policy is applicable to stacked townhomes as well as multi-family dwelling units. Proposals for development in the Area Plans, regardless of the degree to which the density available in the Plan recommendation(s) is achieved or the bonus provisions are utilized, should include a minimum of 8 percent of all residential units in rental developments and a minimum of 12 percent of all residential units in for-sale developments as Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs) and/or WDUs.

The WDU policy works in tandem with the ADU program and does not exempt an applicant from meeting the requirements of the ADU program, if applicable. For proposals that are subject to the ADU Ordinance, the number of required ADUs is calculated first and any remaining units should be provided as WDUs until the minimum percent is met. In no instance should the number of ADUs be less than required by the ADU Ordinance. For proposals that are exempt from the ADU Ordinance, the minimum percent of affordable units should be met by proffered WDUs.

#### **Bonus Density and Intensity**

To encourage the provision of WDUs, development proposals that adhere to the WDU policy may realize a bonus density of 12 percent, with additional bonus density available on a sliding scale up to a maximum of 20 percent provided a proportionate increase in WDUs, as detailed in Tables 1 and 2. In a mixed-use development, the bonus may be realized as nonresidential square footage in an amount that is equal to the square footage of the WDUs provided. Except where otherwise noted in the Area Plans, bonus units provided in a development in adherence to this policy are excluded from the plan's maximum density and intensity recommendations. 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. Type V rental developments that are subject to the provision of affordable dwelling units (ADUs) may realize up to an additional three percent density bonus for WDUs provided under this policy, up to a maximum density bonus of 20 percent for both ADUs and WDUs combined.

For developments planned in terms of dwelling units per acre, the bonus density is reflected as an increase in dwelling units per acre above the maximum planned density, unless otherwise specified in the Plan. For developments planned in terms of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) the increase is reflected as an increase on the residential FAR, unless otherwise specified in the Plan. If the property is proposing a mixed-use development, the bonus intensity is only be calculated on the residential portion of the site.



Example with 12 percent bonus density

PDH-12 Example: Permitted density x bonus density = Potential density with bonus

12 dwelling units per acre (du/ac) x 1.12 = 13.44 du/ac

PRM Example: Plan FAR x bonus intensity\* = Potential FAR with bonus intensity  
 (\*bonus intensity calculated only on residential square footage)

3 FAR with 50% mixed use = 1.5 FAR residential and 1.5 FAR non-residential  
 1.5 x 1.12 = 1.68.

1.68 + 1.5 = 3.18 FAR total (bonus intensity from provision of WDUs may be utilized as non-residential SF)

Table 1: Rental Development

<b>Maximum Number of Units according to Plan Recommendation<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Percent of Bonus Density</b>	<b>Available Bonus Units</b>	<b>Total Number of Units</b>	<b>Number of WDUs Expected</b>	<b>Percentage Workforce Units out of Total Number of Units</b>	<b>Ratio of Bonus Units to Workforce Units</b>
100	12%	12	112	9	8.0%	1.3:1
100	13%	13	113	10	8.8%	1.3:1
100	14%	14	114	11	9.6%	1.3:1
100	15%	15	115	12	10.4%	1.3:1
100	16%	16	116	13	11.2%	1.2:1
100	17%	17	117	14	12.0%	1.2:1
100	18%	18	118	15	12.7%	1.2:1
100	19%	19	119	16	13.4%	1.2:1
100	20%	20	120	17	14.2%	1.2:1

<sup>1</sup> 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 affordable housing goal is met.

Table 2: For-Sale Development

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

**Area Median Income (AMI) Allocation (Countywide)**

Proposals for for-sale and rental development should allocate WDUs as shown in Table 3 below; however, development proposals may voluntarily designate more of the units for households below the income tiers listed above.

Table 3: Countywide Income Tiers for Workforce Dwelling Units.

Income Tier	For- Sale Units	Rental Units
101-120% of AMI	4% of total units	--
81-100% of AMI	4% of total units	--
71-80% of AMI	4% of total units	4% of total units
61-70% of AMI	--	2% of total units
Up to 60% of AMI	--	2% of total units
Total	12%	8%

**Area Median Income (AMI) Allocation (Tysons)**

Proposals for for-sale and rental development in Tysons Urban Center should allocate WDUs as shown in Tables 4 and 5 below; however, development proposals may voluntarily designate more of the units for households below the income tiers listed above.

Table 4: Tysons Income Tiers for Workforce Dwelling Units (except for high-rise condominiums):

<b>Income Tier</b>	<b>For- Sale Units</b>	<b>Rental Units (Option 1)</b>	<b>Rental Units (Option 2)</b>
101-120% of AMI	5% of total units	--	--
81-100% of AMI	5% of total units	--	--
71-80% of AMI	5% of total units	8% of total units	--
61-70% of AMI	3% of total units	3% of total units	--
Up to 60% of AMI	2% of total units	2% of total units	10% of total units

Table 5. Tysons Income Tiers for Workforce Dwelling Units in High-rise Condominiums

<b>Income Tiers</b>	<b>14% - For Sale Units Onsite</b>	<b>16% - For Sale Units Offsite in Tysons</b>
81-100% of AMI	4.67% of total units	5.33% of total units
71 – 80% of AMI	4.67% of total units	5.33% of total units
< 70% of AMI	4.67% of total units	5.33% of total units

**Unit Mix and Size**

For WDUs in Tysons, the bedroom mix of WDUs should be proportional to the market rate unit bedroom mix. For WDUs outside of Tysons, the average size (in square feet) of the WDUs should be within 10 percent of the square footage of the average market rate unit with the same number of bedrooms. All WDUs throughout the county should meet the following minimum unit sizes:

- Efficiency: 450 square feet
- 1-bedroom: 600 square feet
- 2-bedroom: 750 square feet
- 3-bedroom: 900 square feet
- 4-bedroom: 1,050 square feet

### **Implementation**

WDUs will be realized primarily through zoning applications and administered through provisions established by the Board of Supervisors. Proposals to rezone property for residential uses should comply with these guidelines. Proposals to amend a previously approved rezoning which proposes a conversion from office/commercial to residential; requests for additional units to a previously approved residential building; and/or request for a change in unit type (which could include a reduction in units) should comply with these guidelines.

### **Flexibility**

Flexibility may be considered for proposals in which units within the same Transit Station Area or Mixed-Use Center are purchased by the developer and proffered or conditioned as WDUs to meet the requirements of these guidelines. In the event that a specific development warrants consideration of an alternative to this WDU Policy to capitalize on either the development of housing or on the incomes of households, such as low income housing tax credits, tax exempt housing bonds, tax increment financing, tax abatement, or other programs, it is the intent of the Policy to consider such variations when the applicant can demonstrate that the alternate proposal furthers the WDU Policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and offers appropriate controls to regulate, monitor, administer, and manage such units.