

# NORTHERN VIRGINIA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLIANCE

## ADVOCACY ACTION ALERT

### Alexandria Housing Activities April 2021

**City Council Sets Range for 2021 Real Estate Tax Rate** On March 9, the Alexandria City Council voted unanimously to consider a 2021 calendar year real estate tax rate of up to \$1.13 per \$100 of assessed value. The real estate tax rate City Council eventually adopts could be lower or the same as the current rate of \$1.13, but cannot be higher. No increase will be considered for the tax rates on personal property (vehicles) or business tangible property. On February 16, City Manager Mark Jinks proposed a Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget that funds 100% of City government and Alexandria City Public Schools operating costs at the proposed tax rate of \$1.11, which is a 2-cent tax rate decrease from the current rate of \$1.13. By advertising the \$1.13 rate, City Council created flexibility in the tax rate setting decision and will be able to consider operating budget and capital investment priorities that are currently not funded in the City Manager's proposed budget. **City Council will adopt final rates in conjunction with adoption of the FY 2022 budget on May 5. A virtual public hearing on the ordinance establishing the real estate tax rate will be held on Saturday, April 17, at 9:30 AM.** Visit [here](#) for more information about the FY 2022 budget process.

**CC FY22 Budget Work Session #6 Liveable** [Register to attend](#) this virtual budget work session on Housing on Wednesday, April 7, 7-9 PM.

**Arlandria/Chirilagua Plan** Outreach and community engagement discussions continue regarding the recommendations for the Arlandria/Chirilagua Plan. On [April 6, City Council will receive an update on the Plan](#) and a [presentation on the Draft Housing Recommendations](#). This area of the City is a culturally diverse neighborhood, and with the proximity to Amazon's HQ2 and Virginia Tech's Innovation campus, the city's goal is to protect residents' ability to remain in the community in the face of anticipated market pressures, by preserving and expanding housing affordability and opportunity.

**Cohousing Initiative – Introductory Presentation and Online Feedback Opportunity** The City is launching a community process to address cohousing options, affordability and accessibility in neighborhoods throughout Alexandria. With stakeholder input, the study will inform the development of draft recommendations that will provide greater housing choice and accessibility for the city's residents. Community members are invited to view a pre-recorded visual presentation and provide feedback through **April 11** by [visiting the project website](#). The [presentation](#) provides an introduction to Cohousing options and why the City initiated this study.

Community input gathered now and throughout the process will inform staff's policy recommendations considered by the Planning Commission and City Council in June. For more information, visit [alexandriava.gov/Planning](http://alexandriava.gov/Planning) or contact [Alexa Powell](#), Urban Planner, 703.746.4666. *For reasonable disability accommodation, contact [Jackie.Cato@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Jackie.Cato@alexandriava.gov) or 703.746.3810, Virginia Relay 711*

**Celebrate!!** Advocates have virtual openings for two affordable housing communities to attend. On **April 3 at 11 AM**, there will be a ceremony for the opening of [The Spire at The Church of the Resurrection](#) in the West End with **AHC, Inc**, their developer partner and City officials and staff. On **April 20 at 10 AM**, the **Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority (ARHA)** will celebrate the opening of The Lineage at Patrick Street. Together, these openings represent 165 new affordable homes for low income families in two different areas of the City. At a time when there is considerable discussion about housing affordability in Alexandria, this is good news that we should spread far and wide!

**Important Updates on State Programs for Affordable Housing Developers** [Virginia Housing](#) is considering changes to the [FY2022 Qualified Allocation Plan \(QAP\)](#), looking at issues such as cost limits in LIHTC units (important in NoVA high-cost area), disposition of LIHTC properties in year 15 (challenges to the Right of First Refusal provision) and how to incorporate RGGI funds (see below). A draft of changes for public comment will be released in April. Following a series of public forums, the [Board of Commissioners](#) will approve the final draft which will be sent to Governor Northam for his vote of approval in October.

Last July, Virginia officially joined the **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative**, (RGGI), a cap-and-invest program in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic that places a limit on electricity sector emissions. In addition to moving in the right direction with strategies to address climate change, RGGI provides significant benefits for affordable housing. Fifty percent of RGGI revenue will be allocated to energy efficiency for affordable housing. Cap and invest auctions are held 4 times a year and while prices can fluctuate, the most recent auction netted \$22 million for energy efficiency programs. Details are still being worked out on the percentage of funds allocated to preservation vs new construction. The RGGI fund application will be incorporated into the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) [Affordable and Special Needs Housing portal](#). DHCD has extended the deadline for the next round of applications to April 30, 2021.

**A History of Zoning and Segregation in Virginia: Lessons for Today will be featured in a webinar on April 29, 2021 from 5:00 to 6:15 PM.** The issues Northern Virginia faces today regarding affordability and inequitable access to housing are not just a result of market forces of supply and demand. Our history of zoning and development shaped the way housing and neighborhoods in our cities and suburbs look and function today. Join the **Business for a Better World Center** and the **Center for Real Estate Entrepreneurship of the George Mason School of Business** to discuss the historical roots of housing inequities and the opportunities for change, based on the recent [“Zoning and Segregation in Virginia”](#) report from McGuireWoods, a leading law firm in our area.

Featured Speaker: **Jonathan Rak** Jonathan is the former managing partner of the McGuireWoods Tysons Corner office and has practiced law in Northern Virginia for more than

25 years. His practice concentrates on land use and public utility matters. Jonathan devotes a significant portion of his practice to representing landowners seeking regulatory approvals to develop property.

Discussion Panel: **Emily Hamilton** is a Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Urbanity Project at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Her research focuses on urban economics and land-use policy. **Tracy Baynard** joined McGuireWoods Consulting in 1998. She successfully represents private sector clients in the areas of transportation planning, funding and policy; public-private partnership and innovative procurement; education policy; technology policy; and land use and economic development and procurement before state and local governments. **To register, click [HERE](#). Webinar links will be sent one week before the event.**

**Housing Indicator Tool (HIT)** In September 2019, eleven jurisdictions at the **Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)** unanimously adopted housing goals for the region to meet by 2030. Alexandria's mayor and Director of the Office of Housing were leaders among their COG peers during that year-long process of study, deliberation and recommendations. Now we must hold ourselves accountable to solving the region's housing crisis. In response, the **Housing Association of Nonprofit Developers (HAND)** created the [Housing Indicator Tool](#), an interactive, online resource that measures the region's housing progress and provides comparisons between jurisdictions - not to criticize but to support, encourage and share best practices that have been successful in developing housing for the residents in our regional most in need. A companion piece, [Compounding Interest, Compounding Inequities](#) is a powerful narrative of how we arrived at this place and time in our country with systems, policies and practices that so blatantly discriminate against Black and Brown residents. We urge you to invest the time to read this. Regional problems require regional solutions, and HAND has broken ground by creating a mechanism that helps us measure our progress. We are proud that the City of Alexandria is one of only two jurisdictions that has formally adopted the housing goals for the City identified during the COG process.