

NORTHERN VIRGINIA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLIANCE

ADVOCACY ACTION ALERT

Fairfax County Housing Activities February 2021

Workforce Dwelling Unit (WDU) Policy Recommendations This week, the Planning Commission unanimously approved the proposed WDU policy recommendations. Key to these revisions is the elimination of units at 100% and 120% (deemed as market rate) as a percentage of the WDU requirement. The proposed income targets are for units between 60% and 80% of the area median income (AMI) in exchange for density bonus. The lower income levels bring the WDU policy recommendations closer to the County's stated goal of 5,000 affordable units in 15 years for households earning 60% or less of AMI. Thank you to advocates who testified or submitted letters of support - advocacy matters! Developers and their representatives were strong opponents of the percentage of lower income units recommended in the revisions, and even suggested that these changes would discourage development from moving forward. Respectfully, we are inclined to disagree. [The County website on the WDU policy plan amendment](#) provides a comprehensive explanation of the proposed changes and public presentations made to date. The Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing on the WDU policy recommendations on February 23. Be prepared to testify.

Fair Oaks Comprehensive Plan Changes Last November, the Board of Supervisors held a public hearing for Comprehensive Plan amendment [2019-III-FC1](#) for the Fair Oaks Mall property in the Springfield District, and voted to adopt the Planning Commission and staff recommendation as presented in the [staff report](#). The amendment revised the previous overlay recommendations for increased floor area ratios (FAR) in mixed-use residential, retail, hotel and office, depending on the availability of various transit alternatives, to a single recommendation for mixed-use use up to 1.0 FAR, and a higher percentage of residential use. Transit and transportation conditions remain paramount; however, the condition linking the development to mass transit availability has been removed. Modifications have also been made to other conditions related to parks, recreation, and stormwater management. The opportunity to secure meaningful residential development in a place where none existed previously, increasing both housing supply and affordability, is a key recommendation in this comp plan change. We will be following the progress for the redevelopment of Fair Oaks and advocate for opportunities to maximize housing at this site.

Eviction Prevention and Housing Stability Resources for rental and utility assistance continue to be available through the state's Rent and Mortgage Relief Program (RMRP). These programs require collaboration between tenant and landlord to submit the required documentation, but challenges remain to access including changing program requirements, language barriers, internet access and appropriate devices. The infusion of federal funding from recently passed COVID-related legislation provides a substantial amount of rental assistance to carry vulnerable residents and strapped landlords well into 2021. However, Fairfax County has elected to administer rent relief programs at the local level as allowed by Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance program. **As a result, effective February 15, 2021, county properties are no longer covered under the state's RMRP.** The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development and Virginia Housing, who jointly administer RMRP, will no longer accept applications or amendments for residents that reside in these localities. Applicants will be referred to the local programs for assistance. Currently, no information is available for the County's new portal to apply for rent. Contact information for those programs will be provided as soon as it is available.

Almost a year into the pandemic, data on the eviction crisis showing the impact on county residents is emerging. This [Evictions Data Map](#) breaks down writs of eviction by magisterial district. Click on the upper right-hand corner of each district map to see additional information about levels of income and predominant race for eviction hot spots. The data clearly demonstrates that the county's lower income black and brown residents are disproportionately impacted by evictions. We urge county leaders to use this data to make informed policy decisions about the need for safe, quality rental housing that is affordable. We also advocate for more aggressive outreach to communities of color to provide COVID-vaccinations.

Ten-Year Transit Strategic Plan Fairfax County is updating its 10-year Transit Strategic Plan, focused on improving bus service. As housing and community development advocates and practitioners, this is a good opportunity to educate, organize and advocate for better buses for the residents we serve. Public transit options are critical to get to jobs and services. To expand outreach and encourage broader community participation, Fx Co Department of Transportation (DOT) has produced [a flyer in multiple languages](#). They've also created a [good survey tool](#) to get input from residents and riders. Another wave of public meetings on the next iteration of the plans and potential route changes is planned for the spring.

Fairfax County Housing Symposium The County will partner with the **George Mason University School of Business** to host a community dialog "Affordable Housing: A Foundation for Strong Economies, Healthy Communities and Thriving Schools" on Wednesday, March 10, 9 AM - 4 PM. This will be a virtual event held via Zoom. Local leaders, members of the business community, education, healthcare professionals, advocates and industry experts will come together in this day-long discussion. For more information about this free event and to register, click [here](#).

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget The County Executive releases the FY 2022 advertised budget plan on Tuesday, February 23.