

NORTHERN VIRGINIA AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLIANCE

ADVOCACY ACTION ALERT

Regional Summary of Housing Activities August 2021

Welcome to August! We're on a bit of a summer hiatus, so instead of our usual reports for each jurisdiction, we've curated a summary of housing-related initiatives and developments from across the region, including what we know about the **Virginia General Assembly Special Session starting August 2**. We will return to our regular summary reports in September.

Housing is Health Housing is one of the [social determinants of health](#), and it holds a prominent place in the [Community Health Improvement Plan 2025](#) released by the **Alexandria Health Department** and the **Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria**. We strongly endorse this Housing + Health connection, and would like to see collaborations along these lines in other NoVA jurisdictions. NVAHA's **Next Generation of Housing Leaders** group discussed this topic during their last meeting. Their excellent ppt presentation is included. (see attached slides).

Housing Supply and Affordability With housing prices climbing to exorbitant heights and rents rising again, advocates continue to press for [increasing housing production](#), and land use reforms that break the predominant pattern of exclusive, single-family detached zoning in our communities. Increasing supply does not guarantee increased affordable housing, but it can ease demand pressures that increase rents of existing housing stock. To create more choices in neighborhoods with good schools, amenities and existing infrastructure, we need the zoning flexibility to build alternative housing types beyond single family, townhouses and multifamily construction. ['Missing Middle'](#) housing and [Accessory Dwelling Units \(ADU\)](#) are housing types that increase supply and, given their location as infill development, are a more sustainable solution for the built environment in the 21st century.

Design can play a significant role in community conversations about changing land use practices, and increasingly, planners are enlisting architects and design professionals to facilitate these discussions. The City of Norfolk recently adopted a [Missing Middle Pattern Book](#); and Charleston, SC has taken additional steps to [accelerate the production of ADUs there](#). Los Angeles planners are engaging city residents in a discussion of [downzoning and a return to smaller multifamily development](#) that can be integrated into existing single family neighborhoods. Including design professionals in our local conversations may help break the logjam we encounter in discussions about land use reform so that we can create more equitable choices for future generations going forward.

Racial Equity Timeline Arlington has expanded their racial equity work through a newly released timeline documenting key historical events in housing, education, community facilities, planning and more. [Racial History Timelines](#) covers two periods: [1930 - 1945](#) and [1946 - 1960](#). "Acknowledging the racialized origins and policies of United States history is fundamental for communities to gain knowledge and understanding of racial equity. The following timelines document key historical events in Arlington County related to housing, education, community facilities, public safety, transportation, urban planning, public infrastructure, and more. These timelines are a critical component of the County's broader Commitment to Racial Equity, following the County Board's 2019 Equity Resolution. This historical context has, and will continue, to create a foundation for the elimination, reduction, and prevention of disparities in county policies, practices, procedures, and community engagement. The tool can be used both internally by government staff and externally by community members to help frame Arlington's local history and move us closer to being a more equitable community." Thank you, Arlington County, for developing this valuable historical timeline. We recommend this reading for everyone.

Loudoun County's Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan After an 18-month period of analysis and community and stakeholders meetings, Loudoun County has released their [Draft Unmet Housing Needs Strategic Plan](#). While there are plan elements that need additional refinement, we note that Loudoun has drawn upon the best practices of neighboring jurisdictions to address the housing needs of a growing workforce and the shortage of affordable housing options for renters and first-time homebuyers. Recommendations for land use reform, new housing types, locational efficiency (housing near transit or activity centers) and financial resources to build and preserve housing are included. We commend the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, under the leadership of Chair Phyllis Randall, and county staff for this comprehensive analysis and thoughtful recommendations. As with all housing needs analyses, the real work comes with implementation. To compare the housing policies of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun Counties and the City of Alexandria, go to our Housing Toolkit [Housing Policies Page](#).

[Building Immunity how affordable housing funding was protected from the effects of COVID During the Pandemic](#) **The Washington Business Journal** did a deep dive into how local governments and developers continued to finance and build affordable housing during the early months of the pandemic. Highlighting the challenges that both the private and public sector confronted, the article is a testament to the perseverance of the elected officials and developers across the DMV to engage in effective problem solving and collaboration to get the job done.

Virginia General Assembly Special Session August 2, 2021 The purpose of the General Assembly Special Session is to determine how to allocate, within the broad federal guidelines, the \$4.3 billion that Virginia will receive through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) over a two year period. [House Bill 7001](#) lays out the Governor's proposals for spending in 2021 and 2022, however, working in advance with Democratic leaders, the Northam administration has already made large commitments to fund the following:

- \$700 million to expand broadband internet access
- \$353 million for small business relief

- \$250 million to improve HVAC systems and air quality in K-12 school buildings
- \$485 million in federal and state funding for the state's behavioral health system
- \$111 million in financial aid for low and moderate-income undergraduate students
- \$1 billion in reserve to address the potential impact of additional COVID variants

At this time, despite a request from the Department of Housing and Community Development, there is no funding from the ARPA allocated to the state Housing Trust Fund in HB 7001. Advocates will be working with supporters in the GA to secure additional housing investments. [Legislators must not confuse the considerable resources for rental assistance to prevent evictions with much needed investments in housing production.](#) Currently in Virginia, there are only 4 affordable housing units for every 10 households who are eligible. In NoVA, we understand all too well the housing shortage we face.