



## Arlington Partnership For Affordable Housing

March 31, 2021

### Board of Directors

Susan Ingraham Bell  
Chair

Nina Janopaul  
President/CEO

Matthew Birenbaum  
Vice Chair

Rich Jordan  
Treasurer

Kevin Yam  
Secretary

Randy Anderson

Tina Asinugo

Rita Bamberger

Jeanne Booth

Keiva Dennis

Julie Gould

John Green

Jay Harris

Ted Hicks

Paul Holland

John Milliken

Kathie Panfil

Alicia Plerhoples

Nancy Rase

Buzz Roberts

LaTasha Rowe

Bobby Rozen

Michael Spotts

Yolonda Stradford

Andy VanHorn

John Ziegenhein

Dear Arlington County Staff, Housing Commission, and Board:

We congratulate you on the completion of the 5 Year Report on the Arlington Housing Master Plan (AHMP). APAH was an early supporter of the plan, and we applaud your steadfastness in monitoring progress towards achieving the high ideals outlined within. APAH has been grateful to partner with Arlington County on the housing supply goals over the last 5 years and was involved in the production of 582 CAF units added with County aid during that period. In addition, we are pleased to work with the County staff to increase the number of affordable units produced in conjunction with the Ballston Station development. These units are a testament to the County leadership and staff commitment to innovative land use and financial structuring to ensure we were able to produce these new affordable homes.

For APAH, like the County, the goals expressed in the AHMP are more than just ideals; they are necessities for a prosperous and equitable Arlington. Yet it is clear from the progress report that we are far behind schedule in making the AHMP a reality. We are committed to work even harder with the County to increase affordable housing production. Since the AHMP adoption in 2015, Arlington has only added a net 1,433 committed affordable units (CAFs), or about 287 per year, far lower than the rate required to achieve our targets. However, we are optimistic that we can do better, and we are excited that the County has identified key policies to make improvements. Going forward, we have the following comments regarding the plan's possible adjustments and implementation:

### **1. Align Supply Goals with Regional Needs Assessments**

Since the AHMP adoption in 2015, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC), in partnership with the Urban Institute, has published updated housing supply needs for the region. These targets are in many ways more aggressive than the targets set in the AHMP. For example, the Urban Institute estimates that Arlington needs to add 20,900 net new housing units by 2030 to keep up with rising demand. By contrast, the AHMP sets a target of 21,000 net new rental units by 2040, approximately the same number of units but over a much longer time horizon. Secondly, the Urban Institute estimates that Arlington needs 9,900 net new units at "low-middle" incomes (approximately equivalent to 60% AMI or below) by 2030. This is more than half of the 15,800 net new CAFs identified by the AHMP by 2040.

Given the low rate of affordable housing production since AHMP adoption, the AHMP could benefit from short-term targets like those set out in the Urban Institute study. Housing is a regional issue, and Arlington should be a leader regionwide. For that reason, we encourage the county to integrate the MWCOC/Urban Institute regional housing needs targets with the supply

---

4318 N Carlin Springs Road  
Arlington, VA 22203

703.276.7444

[www.apah.org](http://www.apah.org)

goals identified in the AHMP. We also recommend an annual meeting to track progress against these goals to assess progress.

## **2. Accelerate Plan Lee Highway Implementation**

To meet its housing supply goals, Arlington must make room for more housing. The most obvious place to do this is along major transportation corridors like Lee Highway, where dense multifamily housing can grow alongside better transit service and commercial amenities. Since 2015, the county has seen new CAF production throughout the county with the notable exception of North Arlington. The explanation for this is simple: despite the county's push to increase scoring for proposed affordable housing in North Arlington, there are not many sites available for multifamily development. Implementation of a Plan Lee Highway that allows for higher density housing along the corridor could change this, bringing thousands of new affordable units to a high opportunity area of the county. And we can hardly afford further delay. The AHMP sets a target of 2,500 new CAFs along the Lee Highway corridor by 2040. Even after adoption of a new vision for the area, planning for the financing and construction of that number of units will take many years.

## **3. Support Missing Middle Housing Study**

We fully support the county's Missing Middle Housing study to potentially allow for more diverse housing types countywide. Achieving housing affordability will require new naturally produced affordable housing as much as it does county-subsidized housing, and the only way to do this is to allow for more density in single family zones. Middle-density housing, such as duplexes or townhomes, is a natural next step in the process to make Arlington's single-family zones more accessible and affordable. Moreover, some of the county's most segregated and exclusive neighborhoods are single family zoned. This zoning has its roots in racist and classist history, which is well documented by the County's [research compendium](#) on the topic. Therefore, this change is critical for achieving both equity and housing affordability goals.

## **4. Support Bonus Density for Affordable Housing**

We support the County Board's 2019 revision to the bonus density maximum for site plan projects which offer public benefits, such as affordable housing. Given that the county is land constrained, density is necessary for future housing production. However, the benefit of this change is limited without additional height, which is almost always necessary to take advantage of bonus density. That is why we also support the proposed 2021 amendments to Arlington County Zoning Ordinance to allow for modifications of maximum building height for site plan projects providing 100% affordable housing. Even further, Arlington should consider expanding bonus density by-right to 100% affordable housing projects. This change would save thousands of dollars in legal and administrative review costs for affordable housing projects. The District of Columbia has a similar program

in which inclusionary developments may construct up to 20% more gross floor area as a matter of right.

### **5. Continued Focus on Subsidizing 30% AMI Housing**

Of all the County's affordable housing challenges, providing housing for households at 30% AMI or less is perhaps the greatest. Although there are over 10,000 households in the county with incomes of 30% AMI or below, Arlington has less than 300 CAFs that serve this income band. Despite the high costs of living in Arlington, there is significant demand in this income group to live here, where there is easy access to increased employment and education opportunities. In fact, APAH has seen many 30% AMI households at our properties gladly renting 50% or 60% AMI CAFs. We support continued focus on rental subsidies, such as the Housing Grant program, for these households. We also support county funding or private philanthropy, such as that provided by the Arlington Community Foundation, to buy down the affordability of CAFs. Both financing methods have advantages and disadvantages depending on the circumstances of the property.

### **6. Additional Future Actions Identified in the AHMP**

APAH studied additional future actions identified in the update report and also supports the following:

- a) Objective 1.1 Supply. APAH supports the County exploring creative co-locations of housing and community uses including houses of worship and county facilities as has been successfully implemented elsewhere in the County and region.
- b) Objective 2.40 Enable Residents to Age in Place. APAH supports the need to promote the additional creation of new age restricted affordable housing.
- c) Objective 3.5 Ensure County's Affordable Housing Goals integrated into other County Plans and Policies where appropriate. Consistent with the Lee Highway statement above, APAH supports ensure affordable housing goals are consistently included in all land use and planning efforts.

As always, we thank you for your significant work on this effort and stand by the county in its mission to provide affordable housing to all Arlingtonians.

Sincerely,



Nina Anopaul  
President and CEO