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CITY OF FAIRFAX, VA

HOUSING ASSESSMENT & STRATEGY REPORT

Prepared by:



Submitted to:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Fairfax, Virginia, has recently embarked on a comprehensive approach to adding housing and addressing the varied housing needs of its residents. Broadly speaking, this strategy marks a shift for the City, which has seen modest residential development since its population boom in the 1950s and '60s. The designation of multiple redevelopment districts around the City, called Activity Centers, is just one of a number of strategies recently adopted that represent this shift. The goal of the following report is to identify the specific housing needs in Fairfax and provide strategic direction for addressing them.

Through statistical research, stakeholder and public engagement, and strategic workshops with city leaders and staff, the project team has identified five housing-related focus areas for the City. In each focus area, recommendations, case studies, and best practices are provided. Additionally, targeted development types are identified for each of the Activity Centers.

As of the writing of this report, there are many housing-related projects already underway. Whenever possible, those developments have been taken into consideration. However, this report's focus is on future development; specifically, these strategies focus on short- to medium-term solutions. While evolving circumstances might necessitate long-term adjustments to this strategy, the more immediate objectives identified here can help lay the foundation for a successful long-term plan.

The strategy has been divided into five focus areas: housing supply; housing mix; housing affordability; senior and accessible housing needs; and Fairfax as a Place. Recommendations are provided for each focus area and are outlined below.

- 01) HOUSING SUPPLY**
- 02) HOUSING MIX**
- 03) HOUSING AFFORDABILITY**
- 04) SENIOR AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING NEEDS**
- 05) FAIRFAX AS A PLACE**

FOCUS AREAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

01) **HOUSING** **SUPPLY**

- Continue to promote residential development within Activity Centers.
- Identify areas to replace existing commercial with residential development.
- Ensure a healthy mixture of for-sale and for-rent units are included in new developments.

02) **HOUSING** **MIX**

- Consider a variety of uses in planning/rezoning for Activity Center development.
- Expand permissions for Accessory Dwelling Units.
- Encourage development of a variety of unit sizes and types to fill gaps in housing life cycle stages.
- Consider revising policy/standards to accommodate cottage communities and smaller detached homes.

03) **HOUSING** **AFFORDABILITY**

- Evaluate capacity of existing city staff and departments to develop and administer affordable housing programs and meet Comprehensive Plan objectives and determine if additional staff resources are needed.
- Work to identify or create a dedicated, annual source of funding to devote to the creation of affordable housing programs.
- Expand collaboration and programming with the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority.
- Consider strategies for replacing lost affordable housing options.
- Develop programs to support maintenance of existing affordable housing options.
- Explore the utilization of publicly-owned lands through Community Land Trusts to develop affordable housing.
- Continue to seek out public-private partnerships to develop affordable housing.
- Explore opportunities to expand housing options for residents with extremely low household incomes, e.g. less than 30% AML.

04) **SENIOR AND** **ACCESSIBLE** **HOUSING** **NEEDS**

- Expand permissions for Accessory Dwelling Units.
- Encourage development of a variety of unit sizes and types to fill gaps in housing life cycle needs, including low-maintenance, single-level living options.
- Consider revising policy/standards to accommodate cottage communities and smaller detached homes.
- Require universal design features in new developments, especially in affordable housing projects.

05) **FAIRFAX** **AS A PLACE**

- Adjust zoning in Activity Centers around high-density, mixed-use development.
- Identify Activity Center(s) with locations most likely to attract students and recent graduates and focus development around these target markets.
- Identify areas of the city for possible cottage communities both within and beyond Activity Center boundaries that are connected and accessible through trails, etc.



INTRODUCTION

In April 2022, the City of Fairfax (“City” or “the City”) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the completion of a Housing Needs Assessment and Strategy Report in support of the City’s 2035 Comprehensive Plan. The City selected the consulting firm TPMA to conduct the assessment, which launched in the Fall of 2022.

Along with City staff, TPMA consultants designed a project plan, study, and final report with the goal of addressing the Housing Goals from the Comprehensive Plan. These goals include the provision of housing for a full income range of households, supporting growing sectors of the regional economy, development of accessory dwelling units, affordable housing, preservation of existing market rate affordable units, and housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Through one-on-one interviews with subject matter experts, public and stakeholder workshops, quantitative analysis, a housing-related public opinion survey, a strategic working session with the City’s Planning Commission, and continual guidance and assistance from City staff, the project team identified five housing-specific focus areas. For each focus area, recommendations and best practices for addressing housing needs are provided.

The goal of this project was not simply to identify existing problems within the community, but to provide a strategic framework which is actionable, realistic, and aligned with local leaders’ and residents’ vision for their city.

LOCAL APPETITE FOR CHANGE

Throughout this process, the project team engaged local stakeholders, members of the community, elected and appointed officials, and members of City staff. The recommendations presented in this report are directly informed by the perspectives provided through those conversations.

The City of Fairfax, like many cities and regions across the country, is characterized by varying and sometimes-conflicting opinions about local housing issues, as well as the solutions that may help to address them. Through both policy assessment and anecdotal accounts, the project team noted a clear shift in recent years, which can best be described as a renewed commitment to address pressing housing needs within the City which, until recently, were not prioritized by many residents and city leaders.

This shift is encouraging; community buy-in is a critical component of any successful plan. The public’s thoughtful engagement is a promising indicator that this strategy will be successful.

BUILDING UPON RECENT EFFORTS

In recent years, the City of Fairfax has increased efforts to address housing issues, including those related to affordable housing. The full impact of these efforts is yet to be determined, and some of these approaches may need to be revisited and/or adjusted as the housing landscape develops. This report seeks to build upon recent efforts to address housing, which include:

- Adoption of housing priorities within the City's most recent Comprehensive Plan
- Identification of Activity Centers throughout the City marked for redevelopment efforts, including mixed-use development
- Adoption of an Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance
- Development of student-specific housing
- Updates to the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the number of nonconforming lots
- Completion of updated design guidelines that encourage high-quality development
- Engaged economic development initiatives and business partnerships
- Commitments to increase overall housing supply, including senior housing
- Emphasis placed on identifying public-private partnerships
- Support and approval of a permanent supportive housing project
- Continuation of the Renaissance Loan Program for improvements to existing housing stock

It is likely that housing policy in the City of Fairfax will need to be continually adjusted to meet the community's shifting needs (such as zoning revisions in single-family neighborhoods or amendments to the Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance). However, the objective of this report is to provide insight and direction for the ongoing redevelopment outlined in the Small Area Plans, as well as for the development within the five Activity Centers and throughout the rest of the city.

A NOTE ON CITY STAFFING AND RESOURCES

The recommendations presented in this report, particularly those relating to housing affordability, will require a concerted effort on the part of the City to be successful. Current resources and staffing levels are insufficient for meeting the City's housing needs; a commitment to addressing existing housing needs will require dedicated staff and revenues, even for the smallest of these recommendations to be implemented effectively.

The programs and partnerships recommended in this report, which are supported by best practices and case studies, require time and resources to develop, manage, and maintain. Just as community buy-in is important for a plan's success, so is a commitment by the City to sustain ongoing efforts to improve development.

METHODOLOGY

DISCOVERY

Upon launching this project with the City of Fairfax, TPMA consultants reviewed a number of documents and data sources to become familiar with the City and the region. These documents and data sources include:

- City of Fairfax 2035 Comprehensive Plan
- City of Fairfax 2022 Fact Book
- City of Fairfax 2023 Fact Book
- City of Fairfax Multimodal Transportation Plan
- 2016 CUE Transit Development Plan
- Fairfax County 2018 Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan
- Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Housing 2018 Report
- Future Land Use Maps
- Major Development Projects Map
- Old Town Fairfax Small Area Plan
- Northfax Small Area Plan
- Kamp Washington Small Area Plan
- Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance

Additionally, the project team collected housing data from a number of public and third-party sources, including:

- City of Fairfax Housing Data
- U.S. Census Bureau
- American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates
- Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Fairfax County Public Schools
- ESRI
- Lightcast
- CoStar
- ArcGIS Online
- Redfin.com

ENGAGEMENT

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Throughout the project, TPMA consultants met with a variety of community stakeholders and subject matter experts to collect information about the City’s housing needs, as well as the impact that housing issues are having on residents across the demographic spectrum. In addition to meetings with the members of the city staff and Planning Commission, the consultant team held subject-specific interviews to discuss a range of topics including: impacts on the business community, low-income residents, homelessness, disabilities, public-private partnerships, zoning, and development. In total, more than 20 one-on-one and small group interviews were conducted.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

In November 2022, with the assistance of the Department of Community Development and Planning, TPMA consultants hosted community engagement sessions to present findings from the discovery phase. These sessions provided feedback from the city’s residents and civic and business leaders relating to current and future housing needs in Fairfax.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

A web-based City of Fairfax Housing Survey was developed through the combined efforts of City staff and TPMA. The survey, which was circulated in January 2023, was designed to collect feedback from City residents on a variety of housing-related topics. Respondents were asked to answer questions relating to:

- household location and demographic information
- individual preferences for housing types and amenities
- levels of support for types and markets for new housing development
- levels of support for a variety of housing-related policy changes
- gaps in the available supply of housing to meet the needs of senior residents

The survey was closed in early March. In total, 431 completed surveys were submitted. TPMA consultants compiled the results in an online dashboard that allows users to filter and review responses based on a variety of demographic information including age, current housing type, and home value. This dashboard has been shared publicly through a link on the City's website.¹

ANALYSIS

HOUSING DEMAND MODEL

TPMA has developed a housing demand model that forecasts demand for new for-sale and for-rent housing units for the next ten years, broken down into five- and ten-year increments. This model segments projections into age brackets to achieve a more nuanced view of the city's projected growth. Housing needs can be very different for different age groups, and this analysis can help to determine the types of housing that might be needed to address differences in population and market segments. With Esri data and American Community Survey estimates, the model estimates housing demand between 2022 and 2027.

To predict demand from new households, the project team uses five-year projections. To extrapolate to ten years, the growth rate over the first five years (2022-2027) is assumed to remain constant over the next five years (2027-2032). The project team also assumes that the propensity to own or rent, based on American Community Survey estimates, will remain unchanged over the next ten years. Using this information, demand from new households is estimated.



Housing demand is modeled based on three market segments: demand from new households, demand from existing households, and demand from outside the submarket.

Every year, some households may choose to move from one home in Fairfax to a new home within the city. This serves as the basis for demand from existing households. Using household projections, as discussed above, geographic mobility data, and estimates of demand for new housing, demand from existing households is calculated.

¹ <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/community-development-planning/planning/current-studies-projects-plans/housing-assessment>

Finally, the outside submarket demand is calculated, using net commuting flows. The net number of individuals coming into the city from the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria MSA for work could be potential residents of Fairfax. However, these are individuals, and must be converted to households. Using estimates of workers per household in the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria MSA, the number of households is calculated. Finally, not all workers will want to move to Fairfax. By combining American Community Survey estimates of housing tenure in the MSA and estimating the percent of households that want to live in Fairfax, the project team calculates outside submarket demand.

WORKFORCE AFFORDABILITY ANALYSIS

Data and Research Specialists with TPMA conducted an analysis of earnings associated with the common jobs in the region in addition to those expected to display growth in the coming years. The earnings associated with these occupations were then compared to housing costs in the City. The results of these analyses appear in multiple places throughout the report. Primarily, they serve to produce an understanding about what is affordable for the local and regional workforce. The information associated with emerging jobs and sectors also informs the types of development that might help attract these regional workers to live in the City of Fairfax.

As the comparison of single occupations to overall household incomes and housing costs could potentially be misleading (individual incomes do not necessarily equate to household incomes), the affordability analysis uses the cost of one- and two-bedroom rental units where possible to calculate housing costs for single income-earners. Some of the most common jobs, and many of those expected to show growth, are often held by younger individuals, so these analyses are helpful for understanding a specific portion of the target market for new housing developments.

COMPARISON MARKETS AND TRENDS

The project team worked to identify comparison markets, benchmark communities, and best practices to further identify strategies that have proven successful in communities of comparable size, income distribution, housing markets, and staff resources. Where applicable, these best practices are presented in their corresponding Focus Areas. A full summary of the comparison market findings is provided in the Appendix to this report.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the course of the study, the project team recognized the importance of preparing a set of recommendations that aligned with the priorities of the Comprehensive Plan, city staff, local leaders, and area residents. At various stages throughout the process, it was necessary to provide occasional updates to City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council to ensure that the strategic framework matched the realities of the political and cultural environment in the City.

PLANNING COMMISSION STRATEGIC WORKSHOP

At the culmination of the Discovery Phase, TPMA consultants prepared a Summary of Findings presentation, which was delivered to the City of Fairfax Planning Commission in an in-person work session. The project team also used this time to discuss possible solutions with the Commissioners, which helped to inform the final set of recommendations provided in this report.

FOCUS AREA: HOUSING SUPPLY

INTRODUCTION

Despite relatively stagnant regional growth and the recent surge in residential development throughout the City, there is reason to suspect that some local housing demand remains unmet. Additionally, there is evidence of significant demand for housing in Fairfax from outside of the immediate submarket. These two factors are, in part, contributing to the rapid rise in housing costs throughout the City.

The City of Fairfax is largely built out, and efforts to increase the housing supply will likely require the identification and designation of redevelopment districts around the City. Local leaders have already taken significant steps to this end, identifying five Activity Centers for which Small Area Plans (SAPs) either have been or are being developed.

The housing demand estimates that are presented in the three approved Small Area Plans also identify significant opportunities for new housing, specifically for market rate townhomes and multifamily development. The three completed SAPs provide unit counts as part of their development plans combine for roughly 4,500 new units spread across a variety of housing types.

RATIONALE

TRENDS IN POPULATION AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Local and regional population growth has been stagnant in recent years. This presents difficulties in projecting housing demand moving forward. Despite the limited regional growth, however, recent residential development in the City of Fairfax has not led to increased vacancy rates. Developments completed since 2020 are fully occupied and many developments currently under construction are pre-selling at a high rate, indicating continued unmet demand for new housing.

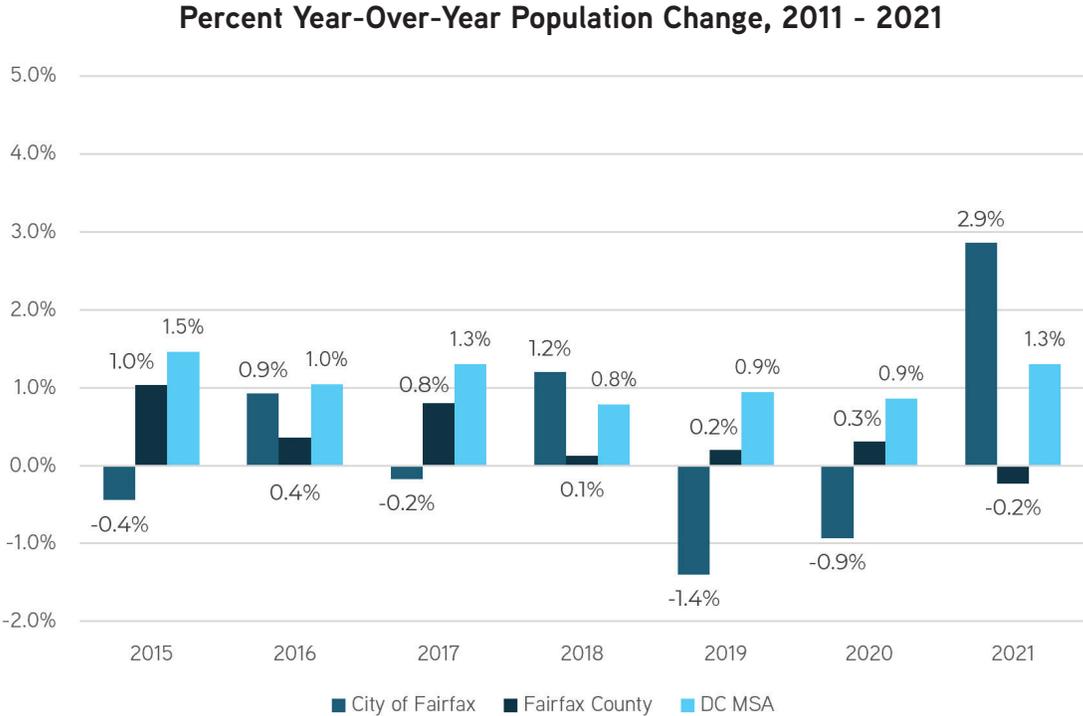


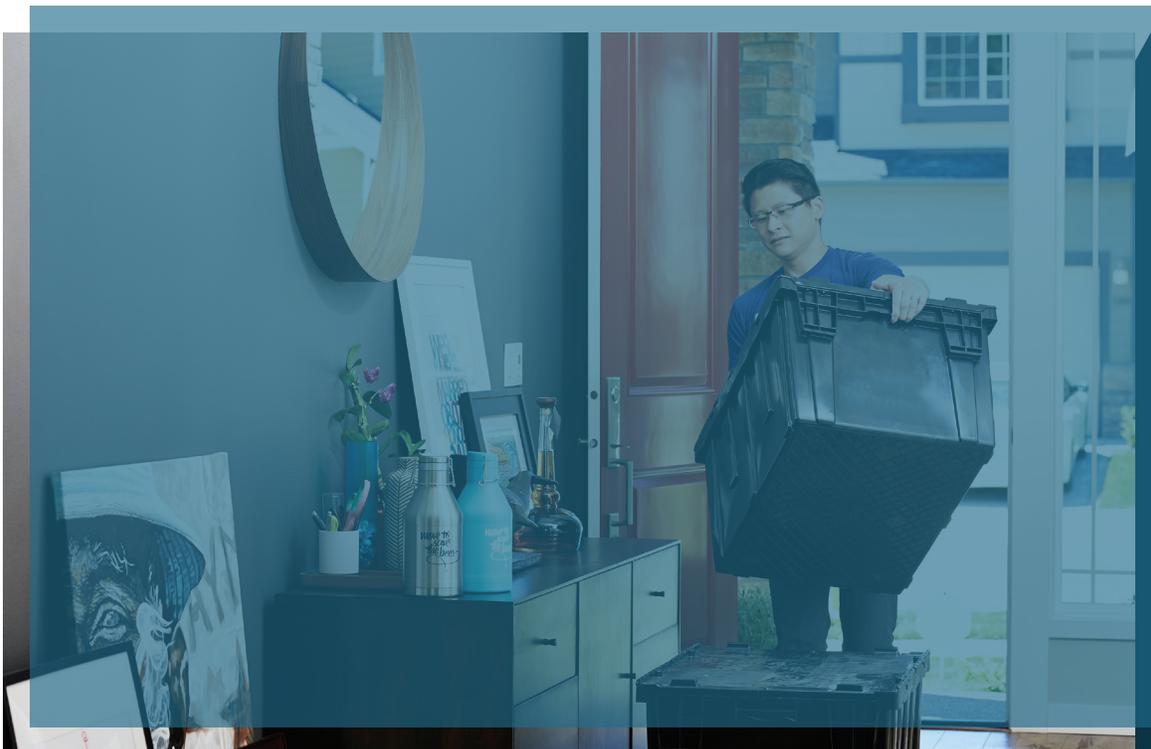
Exhibit 1: Regional Population Growth 2011-2021. Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates.

In Exhibit 1, year-over-year (YoY) population growth is measured for the City of Fairfax, Fairfax County, and the DC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This measures population growth in each geography on an annual basis over a seven-year period. While the areas around the City of Fairfax have experienced significant growth since the City’s last major surge in residential development in the 1960s, the amount of housing within the City has not significantly risen to respond to this demand. In fact, it is likely that the modest population growth within the City can be linked to the lack of residential development over the same period.

As can be seen in Exhibit 2, the population of the City declined by about 4.7% between 1970 and 2000; however, the number of households in the City actually increased over the same period. As children of the Baby Boomer generation left home, the population gradually fell. But, since the household count within the city continued to grow, the demand for housing increased. Therefore, the falling population did not result in any decrease in demand for housing.

Location	% Growth 1970 - 2000	% Growth 2000 - 2020	% Growth 1970 - 2020
City of Fairfax	-4.69%	11.61%	6.37%
Fairfax County	114.29%	17.79%	152.42%
D.C. MSA		32.06%	

Exhibit 2: Regional Population Growth Rates 1970-2020. Sources: U.S. Census, St. Louis FRED.



Residential Development Trends

Prior to 2020, residential development in the City had slowed relative to the overall growth of the region, adding only around 500 total units per decade beginning in the 1970s. Over these five decades, the vast majority of the new residential units were either single-family detached or townhomes.

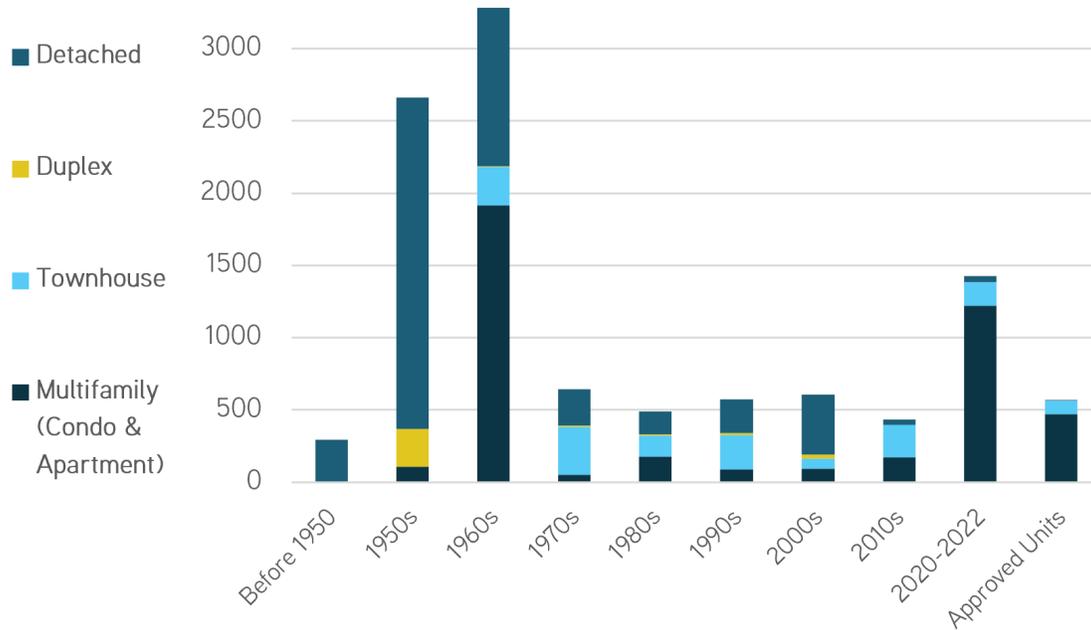


Exhibit 3: City of Fairfax Residential Development by Decade. Source: City of Fairfax 2023 Fact Book.

Recently Approved Housing Developments

The approved Small Area Plans also indicate a demand for housing within the City, specifically for new townhomes and multifamily development. Occupancy within recent developments indicates a continued demand for new housing. As more projects are in the approval process, developers are seeing continued opportunities to increase the supply within the city.

Name	Status	Type	Unit Count
Completed Developments			1,078
Scout on the Circle	Occupied 2020-22	Apartments	400
The Flats on University	Occupied 2022	Student Housing	275
The Moxley	Currently Leasing	Apartments	403

Name	Status	Type	Unit Count
Under Construction			572
Boulevard VI	Under Construction	Condo/Townhouses/ Detached	266
Sutton Heights	Under Construction	Townhouses	50
Northfax West	Under Construction	Townhouses/ Senior Housing	256
Approved Developments			426
Breezeway/Fairfax Gardens	Approved	Condo/Townhouses/ Commercial	62
West Drive Homes	Approved	Detached	6
Fairfax Presbyterian Church	Approved	Affordable Townhomes	10
Layton Hall Apartments	Approved	Apartments	360
Total New Units			2,088

Exhibit 4: Recently Approved Residential Developments. Source: City of Fairfax Major Development Projects Map

The mixed-use development at Scout on the Circle and the student-specific housing at the Flats on University are fully occupied. The Moxley apartment complex is mostly occupied, and developing for-sale properties are selling quickly, even prior to completion.

PROJECTED DEMAND FOR NEW HOUSING UNITS

TPMA's Housing Demand Model, as detailed in the Methodology Section of this report, projects demand for 2,276 additional new housing by 2027, and a total of 4,589 units by 2032. Removing the unit counts from developments that are approved, under construction, or have been completed since the data for these estimates was collected,² the outstanding projected demand for the next ten years is for 4,085 units.

² These unit counts do not include Scout on the Circle, the Flats on University, the Moxley, or the approved Layton Hall developments listed in Exhibit 4.

5-Year Demand for New For-Sale Units	1,024
5-Year Demand for New For-Rent Units	1,252
10-Year Demand for New For-Sale Units	2,062
10-Year Demand for New For-Rent Units	2,528
Total Projected 10-Yr Demand for New Housing Units	4,589
Number of Units Currently Under Construction	504
Remaining 10-Year Demand for New Housing Units	4,085

Exhibit 5: Projected Housing Demand by Tenure. Source: TPMA Housing Demand Model, ESRI Population Projections, U.S. Census Bureau Commuting Patterns.

For a more detailed assessment of the types of housing required to meet future demand, the overall unit count can be further broken down by age bracket.

	5 Years		10 Years	
	For-Sale Demand	For-Rent Demand	For-Sale Demand	For-Rent Demand
Demand from New Household Growth and Existing Household Turnover				
Households <35	-184	-304	-373	-616
Households 35-54	444	734	901	1,488
Households 55-64	-248	-409	-502	-829
Households 65+	497	821	1,008	1,665
Demand from Outside Submarket				
Households <30	132	105	264	211
Households 30-54	256	205	513	409
Households 55+ ³	126	100	251	200

³ The top age bracket provided for commuter data is 55+, which is why these brackets differ from those used to calculate new household growth, which represent the age brackets used in ESRI's population projections.

Total	1,024	1,252	2,062	2,528
Households 55+ Total Demand	375	512	757	1,036
% of Total Demanded by Households 55+	36.62%	40.89%	36.71%	40.98%

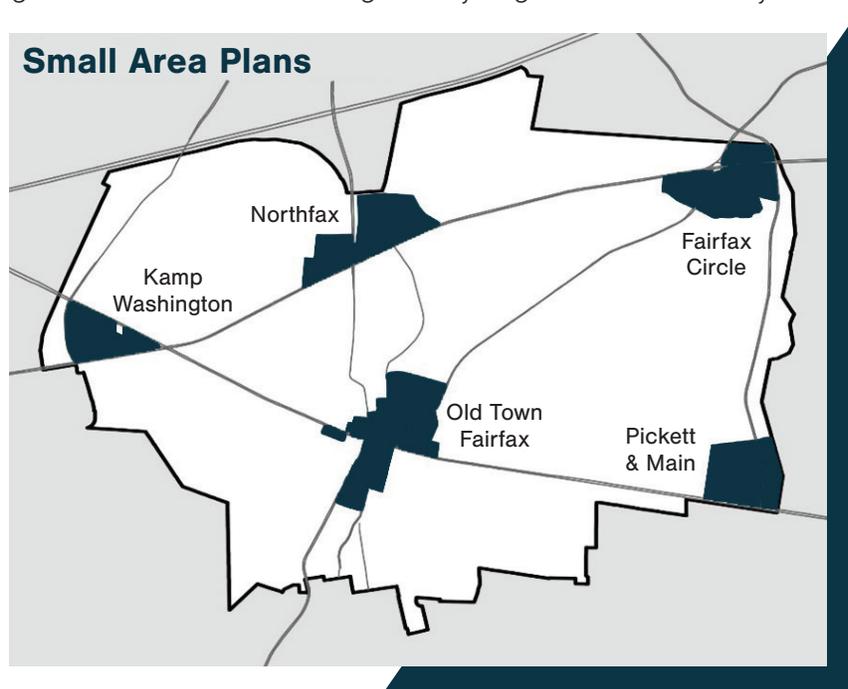
Exhibit 6: Projected Housing Demand Detail. Sources: TPMA Housing Demand Model, ESRI Population Projections, U.S. Census Bureau Commuting Patterns.

In total, almost 40% of the demand for new housing units will be for households 55+. Demand for these units could be a combination of market rate, affordable housing, as well as senior/age-restricted independent living, some of which could be accounted for through current and recent development projects.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

The City of Fairfax has taken significant steps to address its housing shortage. Residential development in the last three years has already outpaced that of previous decades. The city has identified five redevelopment districts, dubbed Activity Centers. These should help the City meet the high demand for housing while maintaining the neighborhood character in the single-family neighborhoods that many residents hope to keep.



The three Small Area Plans that have been approved by the City as of this report (Old Town Fairfax, Northfax, and Kamp Washington) have outlined a significant increase in mixed-use development, place-making, and connectivity that will increase the housing supply, bring increased economic and cultural activity, and improve aesthetics in the designated Activity Centers and the City as a whole.

Best Practice

Downtown Revitalization Case Studies; Delaware County, PA

In 2016, Delaware County, PA, compiled a list of downtown redevelopment case studies from locations around the state. Included are a variety of affluent suburban areas around the Philadelphia MSA, many of which are focused on revitalizing historic districts. Many of the redevelopments are the product of a multi-organizational, collaborative effort to improve the area.

REPLACING COMMERCIAL WITH RESIDENTIAL

Given that the City of Fairfax has very little undeveloped land, nearly all new housing development will take the form of infill redevelopment, and in many cases may result in the conversion of commercial properties and zones to residential ones. While the City’s market for office and commercial space is relatively healthy, demand for commercial spaces, and for office buildings in particular, is trending downward nationally. If this trend begins to affect the City of Fairfax, the rate at which this conversion occurs could increase.

Through survey responses, Fairfax residents signaled support for this transition. Nearly 57% of respondents indicated that they “somewhat support” or “support” replacing commercial lots with residential development compared to 15.76% who selected “somewhat oppose” or “oppose.”

Tax and City Revenue Implications

Reallocating commercial zones and properties to residential has the potential to impact the City’s tax revenues. In many places around the country, discussions around this type of transition have led to fears of reduced revenues. However, as residential development (some of which has taken the place of commercial properties) has increased in Fairfax, there has not been a significant decrease in the taxes collected, based on real estate assessments. Assessed values for commercial properties and residential properties alike have grown over the past 15 years; in fact, more substantial growth in residential assessments is likely to have had more of an impact on increased real estate tax revenues than growth in commercial assessments.

Total City Real Estate Assessments, By Classification

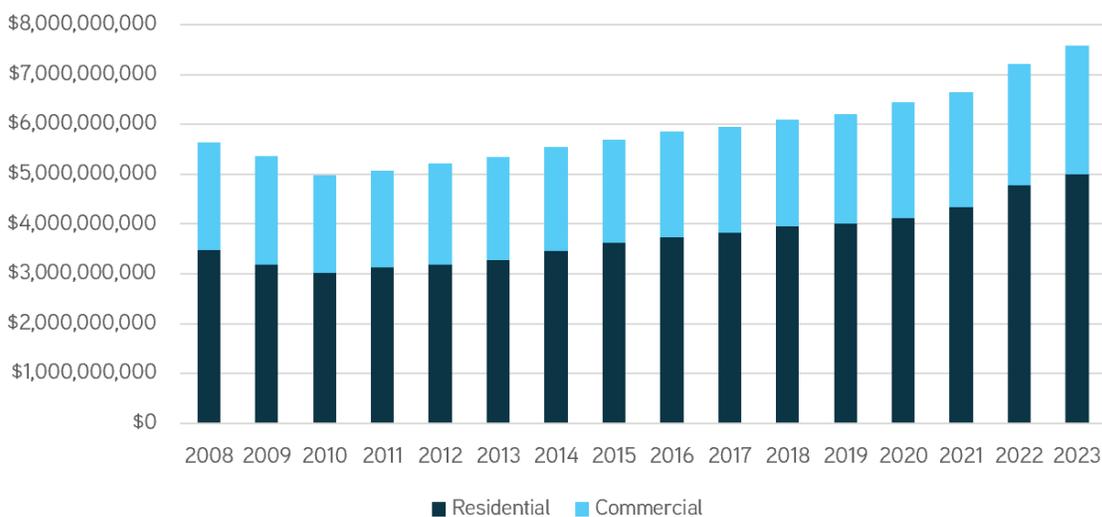


Exhibit 8: Total City Real Estate Assessments, by Classification, 2008-2023. Source: City of Fairfax Budget

In Exhibit 8, these assessments are presented for the last 15 years. The above figures represent only taxes based on real estate assessments, and therefore do not include the potential change in revenues generated by commercial activity. The amount of revenue generated through Local Sales and Use Tax has significantly increased since FY2020, and Business and Operation Licenses are estimated to recover from a dip in FY2021. While the data indicate growth as far as residential and commercial assessments are concerned, there is not enough evidence to determine whether the conversion of commercial space to residential space has a significant impact on city revenues. Both are important parts of a growing economy, and the maintenance of an appropriate mix should be prioritized.

General Fund Revenue by Type, 2015-2022

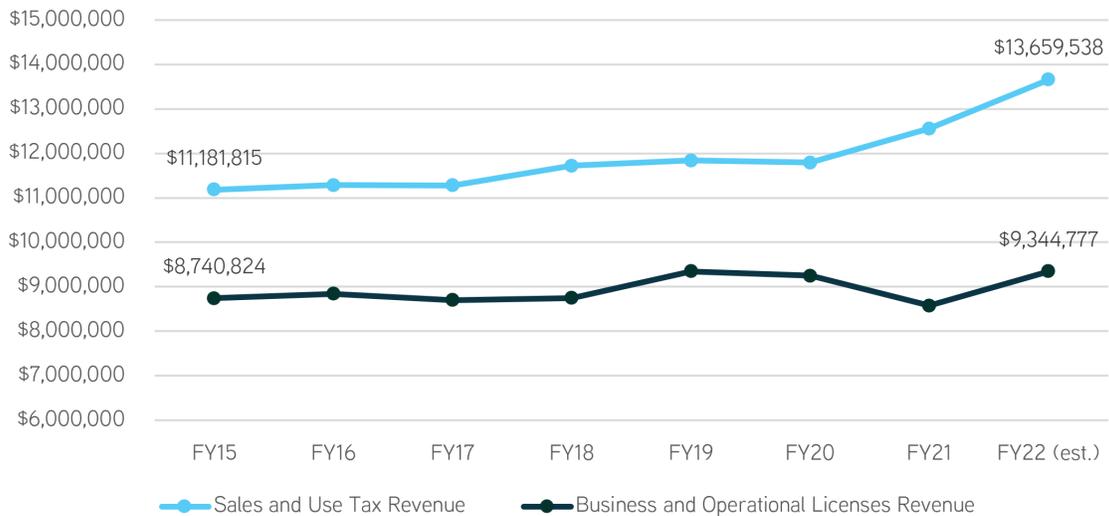


Exhibit 9: City of Fairfax General Fund Revenues by Type, 2015-2022. Source: City of Fairfax Budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to promote residential development within Activity Centers
- Identify areas to replace existing commercial with residential development
- Ensure a healthy mixture of for-sale and for-rent units are included in new developments

FOCUS AREA: HOUSING MIX

INTRODUCTION

As opposed to the typical analysis of housing mix as a measure of existing residential densities, the variety within Fairfax’s housing supply is best evaluated through the full scope of housing needs that are met by the current supply of units. When viewed through this lens, a housing stock that might appear to show a wide variety of densities instead reveals some significant gaps in the housing mix that leave certain residents’ needs unmet. For example, the heavy presence of townhomes in Fairfax might appear in the data as evidence of a healthy housing density mix despite the fact that these units serve a very similar function to the detached single-family homes that are also quite prevalent within the City. Viewed as a measure of the housing needs that these units meet, the size, number of bedrooms, and overall cost of these townhomes serve as a slight variation on the detached luxury home than a meaningful alternative to it.

Despite the seemingly limitless demand for these types of units, the housing mix in the City of Fairfax has significant gaps that middle-density townhomes alone cannot address.



Housing options for single renters and owners, young and growing families, and downsizing seniors remain largely unavailable within the City, creating possible challenges to long-term growth and economic sustainability.

An expansion of the City’s supply of housing units that are of a smaller size and cost than the typical new single-family or townhome could help to serve a wider variety of housing needs in the City – and potentially help to create more availability within the housing supply.

RATIONALE

CURRENT HOUSING MIX

From 1970 to 2020, the vast majority of new residential units were either single-family detached or townhomes. During this time, a total of 1,102 detached homes and 1,001 townhomes were built in the City – compared to 591 total units of multifamily housing over the same 50-year period. Of this latter group, 231 were apartments and 360 were condominiums (see Exhibit 3).

This trend remained largely consistent throughout the 50-year period. However, in 2020, the mixed-use Scout on the Circle development was completed in the Fairfax Circle Activity Center, adding 400 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom apartments to the City’s housing mix. The Scout on the Circle development is an example of a renewed focus on creating higher-density options within the City. As housing demand remains high, it will be important to continue to prioritize the development of a diverse set of housing stock.

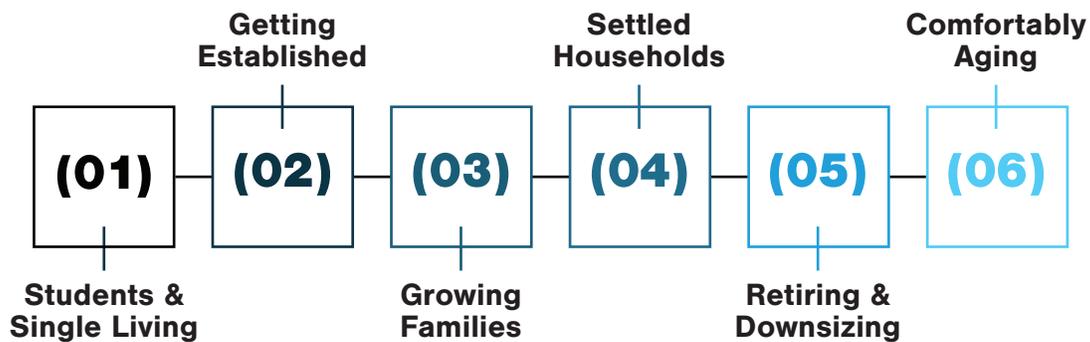
Unit Type	Unit Count	Avg. Total Area (excl. basements)	Avg. Assessed Value (2022)
Condominium	1,288	1,041 sq. ft.	\$298,108
Duplex	264	1,398 sq. ft.	\$396,947
Detached Home	4,927	2,098 sq. ft.	\$682,118
Townhouse	1,312	2,115 sq. ft.	\$621,604
Attached (2 unit)	63	2,253 sq. ft.	\$709,232
Attached (3 unit)	123	2,732 sq. ft.	\$851,905

Exhibit 10: For-Sale Units by Type, Area, and Value. Source: City of Fairfax Department of Community Development and Planning

While recently completed and approved residential developments will expand the housing supply in the City, they will not do much to expand the diversity of that supply. With the exception of the affordable for-sale homes being built on the Fairfax Presbyterian Church property and the 200 senior-living units at Northfax West, the remaining for-sale properties at Sutton Heights, Boulevard VI, and the Breezeway are expected to be similar to the existing for-sale properties detailed in Exhibit 10. However, the developer EYA voluntarily included a percentage of affordable units in line with the Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance with the Sutton Heights development. As of the time of this report, Sutton Heights is advertising three remaining unsold townhomes of approximately 2,390 sq.ft. starting at \$978,070 each.

THE HOUSING LIFE CYCLE

A diverse housing mix is important to the overall health and sustainability of a local economy. Even for suburban and affluent communities, a housing supply that meets a variety of needs for residents and workforce can create stability for businesses and critical services. Offering housing that meets the needs of the six stages of the housing life cycle (outlined in Exhibit 11) provides a community and its residents with both flexibility and mobility through a wide range of options for residents with varying incomes and needs.



(01) Students & Single Living Entry-level households		
Singles or couples in their early 20s	No children, often living with roommates	Prefer inexpensive apartments
(02) Getting Established First-time homebuyers and move-up renters		
Often married or cohabitating couples; mid-20s to mid-30s	Some households include children	Purchase modestly priced single-family homes or relocate to upscale rental properties
(03) Growing Families Move-up homebuyers		
Mostly married or cohabitating families; late 30s through 40s	Many households include children	Often purchase newer, larger, and more expensive homes from previous stage
(04) Settled Households Mature families, emerging empty-nesters, and never-nesters		
Typically couples in their 50s and 60s	Couples whose children have left home or couples/individuals who never had children	Many prefer owning their homes, but some consider renting at this point. Prefer lower-maintenance housing options
(05) Retiring & Downsizing Empty-nesters and younger independent seniors		
Typically couples and individuals in their late 60s and 70s	Couples and individuals who are able to live without significant health or lifestyle constraints	Many still prefer owning their homes, but are increasingly moving to low-maintenance options. Increasing preference for rental options
(06) Comfortably Aging Older seniors		
Increasing number of individuals living alone who are in their mid-70s or older	Higher percentage of females at this stage due to shorter life expectancy for males	Higher likelihood of the need to leave a single-family home due to health constraints or desire for very low-maintenance housing

Exhibit 11: Stages in the Housing Life Cycle.

Currently, the City of Fairfax offers a variety of housing options for stages 3-5. While there have been efforts to create additional housing for students in stage 1, there are few options for other residents in stages 2 and 6.

Filtering

The development of options for households in stages 5 and 6 of the housing lifecycle can increase the availability of options for households in the prior stages. What results from this process known as “filtering” is a more efficient use of the existing housing stock, which can help stem rising housing costs that result from a restriction of the existing supply of homes. This allows for younger households to remain and flourish within the City while providing new options for the aging community.

If aging households are without options for downsizing, they’ll choose to remain in their larger homes, which are better suited for younger families. This reduces options for younger, growing households,⁴ which can significantly impact the housing market. Costs are driven up and some families, who would otherwise choose to stay in the City, are forced to leave.

The existence of limited options for downsizing was confirmed in the Public Opinion Survey, with 52.27% of all respondents indicating they agreed Fairfax needs more options for aging households. That figure increases to 62% agreement, if only responses from individuals over 55 years of age are included.

52%

of survey respondents agreed that Fairfax needs more options for aging households



Student Housing

The creation of smaller, lower maintenance options can also create more options for students and younger households who are currently renting homes within single-family neighborhoods. The project team heard a variety of concerns about single-family homes being rented either to students or as short-term rentals.

Data on homes which are typically characterized as “for-sale”, but which are really being rented, can be difficult to obtain. City staff has attempted to estimate the number of these units through an analysis of properties whose addresses do not match the tax address filed with the city. While this metric is unlikely to be completely accurate, the data (Exhibit 12) do suggest that a significant percentage of “for-sale” homes are actually being rented.

⁴ “While Seniors Age in Place, Millennials Wait Longer and May Pay More for Their First Homes.” Freddie Mac. February 2019. <https://www.freddiemac.com/research/insight/20190206-seniors-age-millennials-wait>

Imputation of Rental Status for Owned Housing Units

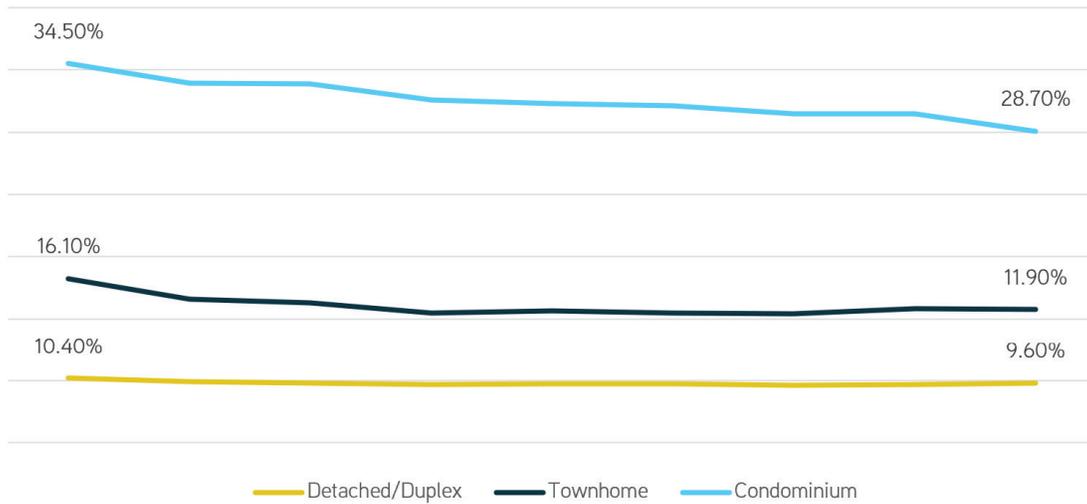


Exhibit 12 : Imputation of Rental Status for Ownership Housing Units by Type, 2014-2022. Source: City of Fairfax Planning Department.

These figures could underestimate the incidence of rentals, especially given the likelihood that short-term rentals (though not permissible under City ordinances) are happening but absent from the data. While the impact of such rentals on their neighborhoods is not quantifiable, residents have reported increased traffic and poorly maintained properties in single-family neighborhoods.

MAINTAINING NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Through interviews and survey responses, many Fairfax residents expressed a strong desire to maintain the existing, unique “character” of Fairfax, especially in single-family neighborhoods. Respondents indicated an overall opposition to increasing density in these neighborhoods, even relatively small changes such as allowing duplexes. They also indicated relatively strong support for the creation of additional detached homes as a priority for future development in the City.

Public Survey: Support for Development Involving Single-Family/Detached Housing

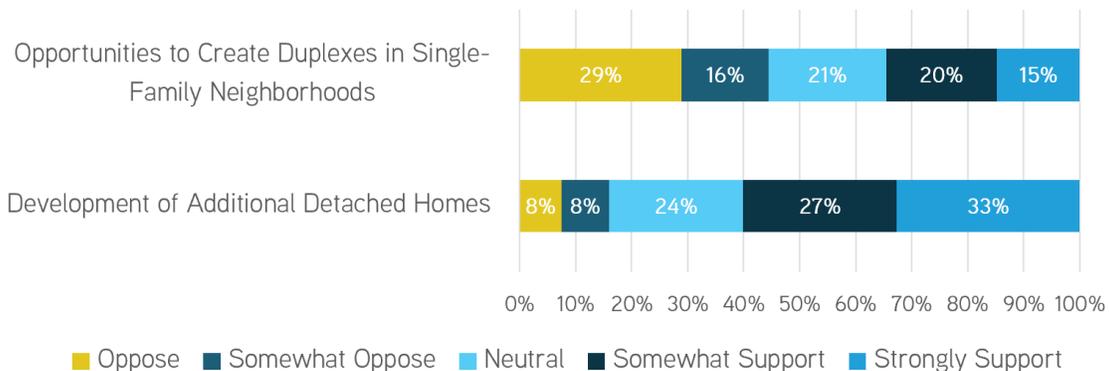


Exhibit 13: Public Support for Maintaining/Creating Single-Family Detached Neighborhoods. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

The designation of redevelopment districts throughout the City should allow the City to balance, in the short term, the expansion of the local housing supply with the maintenance of the single-family neighborhoods that many residents would like to protect. It is worth noting, however, that medium- to long-term efforts may require the adjustment of single-family zoning within the City to allow for the creation of more middle-density options. As Exhibit 13 demonstrates, current opposition to zoning designations of this kind will likely be an obstacle.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Mixed-use development, a priority throughout the approved Small Area Plans, allows the City to maintain or expand commercial and retail properties while creating additional and varied housing options. Residential units in mixed-use developments allow residents unparalleled access to amenities and are often characterized by walkability, shared community spaces, and venues for social interactions and cultural events. Well-designed mixed-use developments strike a balance between greater residential density and the creation of a neighborhood feel. Many of Fairfax’s residents indicated preferences for the amenities that mixed-use development can offer, including access to green spaces.

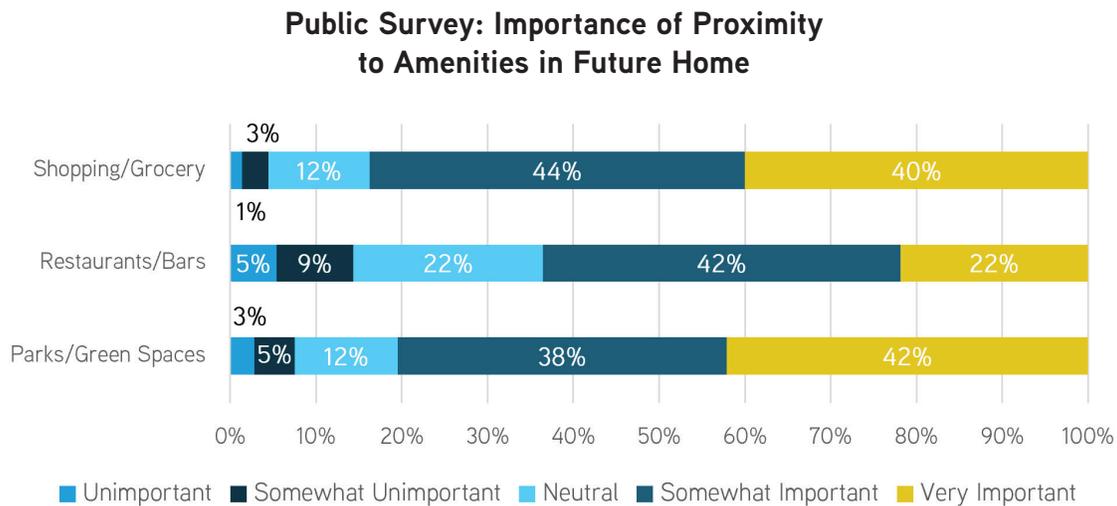


Exhibit 14: Prioritization of Proximity to Amenities. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

The addition of mixed-use development does not necessarily preclude the expansion of green spaces in the community. In fact, many successful mixed-use development projects include shared and green spaces, creating a destination for those looking to enjoy outdoor spaces as part of their housing and shopping experiences. Scout on the Circle, which does offer its residents access to amenities such as groceries, is not perceived as a destination for those seeking “stay-and-play”, in large part due to a layout and design that does not include any sizeable, publicly accessible green spaces. The nearby Mosaic District, on the other hand, does offer a greater opportunity for residents and visitors to spend time in open, green, and communal spaces.

The growing market of millennials and “Gen-Z” in the City of Fairfax should be considered when devising an approach to new housing developments in the City. When survey responses are filtered for those residents under the age of 45, proximity to groceries, parks/green spaces, and access to off-street parking and sidewalks become the top preferences. For those respondents under the age of 25, the preference

for a home with a yard drops outside of the top five priorities. It is likely that a mixed-use district that includes these public amenities will be a more attractive destination for residents like college students, recent graduates, and other young people.

ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

While the City of Fairfax currently allows accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in some cases, expanded use of these attached or detached housing options may help to create both supply and variety within the City's housing stock. ADUs can increase the available rental supply within the city, potentially creating some additional student or single household options. In some communities, ADUs have specifically targeted low-income single adults, as ADUs can often maintain their affordability by virtue of their small size. In fact, some cities have ensured ADUs remain affordable by implementing limits on the allowed size of the ADU, proportional to the size of the original home. This prevents the development of oversized units which lose their affordability.

Parking, traffic, and infrastructure assessments may be needed to ensure limited impact on single-family neighborhoods. In areas with larger lot sizes, an on-site parking requirement can help prevent overcrowding of streets. The implementation of off-street parking requirements is also likely to limit the ability to construct ADUs on smaller lots, which might decrease the uses of ADUs where issues related to overcrowding are more likely. However, it is recommended that on-site parking requirements are not implemented in areas close to transit hubs.

An additional step that can be taken to reduce the costs of ADU development is the waiving of hookup and development fees. Connecting to sewer, water, and other city infrastructure can be expensive. To encourage development, hookup fees could be waived. Alternatively, ADU utility extensions from the primary home structure could be permitted, where possible. A cheaper, more flexible development process can encourage a more widespread use of the ADU allowance.

Residents had mixed opinions when asked about their support for expanded use of ADUs in the City; but, on net, responses were positive with a slight preference for attached ADUs (49% positive to 26% negative) over detached ADUs (45% positive to 32% negative).

Best Practices

Accessory Dwelling Units; Decatur, GA

In 2015, Decatur, GA revised its zoning codes to reduce the minimum square footage for a home and make it easier to build accessory dwellings in single-family residential districts, provided lot size and setback requirements are met. ADUs are working to create small rental housing opportunities in single-family neighborhoods and provide additional income to help cover mortgage payments for the homeowner. They also offer a housing option for aging parents, young adult children, or caregivers to support aging in place. City staff assist single-family homeowners interested in pursuing ADUs on their properties.

Designing Accessory Dwelling Unit Regulations; The Urban Institute

Researchers for [the Urban Institute](#) put together a policy briefing for the City of Alexandria, VA with ten recommendations for designing and implementing regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to limit the burden on homeowners who wish to build them.

COTTAGE COMMUNITIES

Cottage Communities can serve a variety of needs for residents as they tend to be smaller, often detached, for-sale or rental properties. They typically require less maintenance than large homes, and still offer access to communal green spaces. Cottages can also be built to match the aesthetics of the surrounding properties and communities and are therefore more easily welcomed in historic districts or near single-family neighborhoods.

These Cottage Communities help to provide for first-time homebuyers, as well as those looking to downsize in comfort of a detached home. Currently, the City of Fairfax zoning codes make the development of these communities difficult, and it is likely that adjustments to unit-per-acre restrictions will be required to create districts for this type of development. The National Association of Home Builders has put together a guide for Cottage Community ordinances and best practices.⁵

Cottage Communities have shown a significantly lower rate of return for developers as compared to townhomes and single-family homes. However, continued development of exclusively profit-focused units will only lead to further imbalances in the housing stock. If the City is interested in improving its housing mix, the development of strategies to encourage diverse development, such as Cottage Communities, will likely be required.

Best Practice

Home Yard Cottages; Spokane, WA

In 2006, Spokane, Washington updated its housing code to allow for the development of 6-12 small cottage homes (not to exceed 1,000 sq. ft.) on lots of at least 21,780 sq. ft. These developments receive a density bonus, and the developer of Home Yard Cottages (Transitions LIHTC LLC) used Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to support the project. This property offers 24 cottage homes with studio, 1, 2, and 3-bedroom options for prospective residents. Within the property, residents can access a community room, shared computers, and a central playground. To qualify for tenancy, households must meet the state's definition of "homeless" or fall below the 50% AMI threshold.

INCENTIVIZING SPECIFIC TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT

The City of Fairfax has taken significant steps toward the development of diverse housing in the City. However, encouraging a greater variety of market-rate housing is likely to require some additional incentives and/or zoning adjustments.



Upzoning, density bonuses, reduced parking requirements, reduced fees, and expedited approval processes can give City leaders tools for expanding the City's housing mix.

These incentives can encourage developers to provide different types of development than those which would otherwise be the most profitable.

⁵ <https://www.nahb.org/-/media/NAHB/advocacy/docs/top-priorities/housing-affordability/ordinances-and-built-examples-of-cottage-courts.pdf?ref=sidenote.news>

Best Practices

Incentives to Encourage the Development of Lower-Cost Housing Types; Local Housing Solutions

Local Housing Solutions, an impressive resource for housing policy, provides brief explainers, best practices, examples, and case studies for achieving desired results across a variety of housing-related topics. While some of the information is high-level, there is a significant library of housing policies for a detailed account of how communities are addressing their housing needs.

Infill Design Toolkit; Portland, OR

In 2008, the City of Portland published an Infill Design Toolkit to aid developers, designers, and residents interested in developing missing middle housing. It includes models that meet the city's land use regulations, previously approved projects, and best practices to guide design efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider a variety of uses in planning/rezoning for Activity Center development
- Expand permissions for Accessory Dwelling Units
- Encourage development of a variety of unit sizes and types to fill gaps in housing life cycle stages
- Consider revising policy/standards to accommodate cottage communities and smaller detached homes

FOCUS AREA: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

INTRODUCTION

A variety of factors, some of which include the supply and mix of the available housing stock, are contributing to a significant affordability issue within the City of Fairfax. As many studies suggest, to simply build new homes is unlikely to make a significant impact on the overall affordability of housing (Stacy et al., 2023).⁶ Further steps must be taken to drive down housing costs in the area, including, but not limited to: zoning adjustments, housing subsidies, and the dedication of a consistent funding stream.

If unaddressed, the lack of affordable housing can have far-reaching, negative impacts on the community. The workforce in the City of Fairfax, which is essential to local businesses and community services, is quickly being priced out of the market. For many workers, homes considered “market-rate affordable” are actually more expensive than they can afford. If enough of the population chooses to relocate to areas with more affordable housing, the City could experience labor shortages. Human capital is an important asset for every community, and the housing stock should be built to accommodate the shifting needs of the population.

RATIONALE

RISING HOUSING COSTS

The cost of housing throughout Northern Virginia and the Washington D.C. MSA has grown considerably in the last five years, and the City of Fairfax is no outlier. The costs to purchase or rent a home have risen sharply in recent years. While many factors are likely contributing to these rising costs, it is clear that demand for housing is much higher than the supply.

Rising Purchase Price

The median home purchase price in the City rose by 25.72% from June 2018 to June 2023. While some markets around the country have cooled after mid-pandemic surges, this has not happened in Fairfax. The advertised prices in newly built townhome developments like Boulevard VI and Sutton Heights start at \$900,000, and prices for new, high-end developments are likely to sell at similar price points. The demand for for-sale properties is high, which can be seen in the fact that developments under construction are pre-selling at high rates.



⁶ Stacy, C., Davis, C., Freemark, Y. S., Lo, L., MacDonald, G., Zheng, V., & Pendall, R. (2023). Land-use reforms and housing costs: Does allowing for increased density lead to greater affordability? Urban Studies. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231159500>

Median Home Purchase Price 6/2018 - 6/2023



Exhibit 15: City of Fairfax Median Home Purchase Price 6/18 - 6/23. Source: Redfin Market Insights.

Rising Cost to Rent

Rental costs are also increasing, partially as a result of new, high-end developments and the loss of existing, market-rate affordable options. The average rent for a 2-bedroom rental unit in the newly developed properties has eclipsed \$2,800 per month, which is affordable for a relatively small percentage of the local population.

Average Charged Rent by Unit Type, 2018 Q1 - 2022 Q2

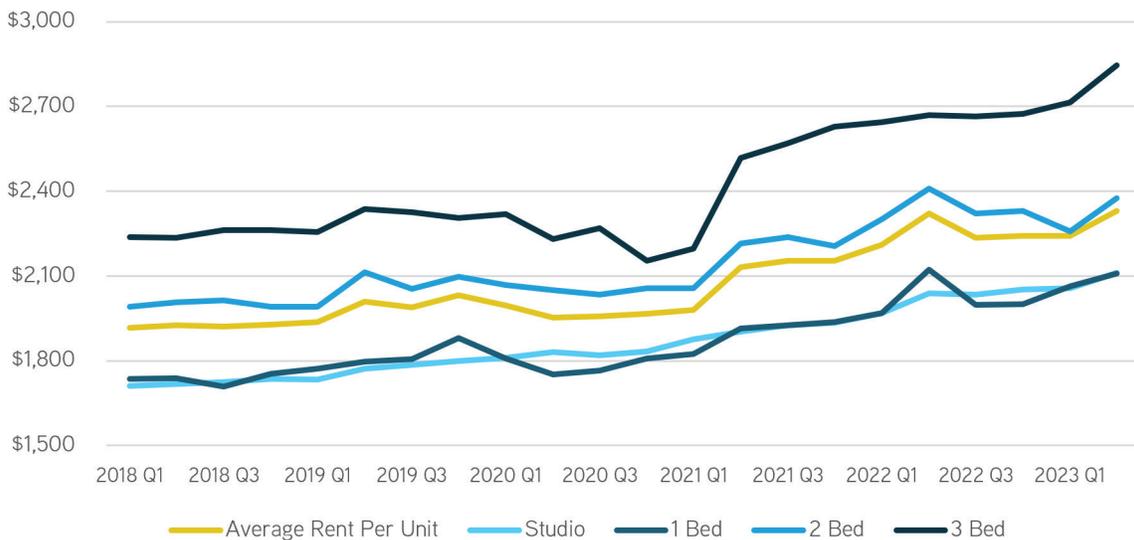


Exhibit 16: City of Fairfax Average Contract Rent by Unit Type, 2018-2022. Source: CoStar Multifamily Historical Data.

Market Rate Rental Housing

The steep rise in contract rent in the City is placing a financial burden on residents. This issue has unlikely to have been reduced by many of the new developments; while some studies suggest that new development can lower or stabilize rental costs for older properties, it is unclear whether the new units are freeing up other, more affordable housing stock for lower-earning residents.

The smallest apartment advertised on the Scout of the Circle website is a 639 sq. ft. 1-bedroom apartment. The advertised monthly rent for this unit is \$2,356. The 719 sq. ft. model starts at \$2,808 per month.⁷ The smallest apartment listed on The Moxley’s website is a 576 sq. ft. studio with an advertised price of \$1,890. The smallest 1-bedroom at The Moxley is advertised at 704 sq. ft. for \$2,350 per month.⁸

Name ⁹	Year Built	Unit Count	Avg. 1-Bd Rent	Avg. 2-Bd Rent	Avg. 3-Bd Rent
Churchill Mews	1965 ren. 2010	20	-	-	\$3,114
Eaves Fairfax City	1988	141	\$2,173	\$2,773	-
The Moxley	2022	403	\$2,260	\$2,897	\$3,619
Scout on the Circle	2020	400	\$2,454	\$2,872	\$3,486

Exhibit 17: Average Rent in Market-Rate Multifamily Properties by # of Bedrooms. Source: CoStar Multifamily Data

“Market-Rate Affordable” Housing

Prior to the adoption of the 2020 Affordable Dwelling Unit amendment to the City of Fairfax Zoning Ordinance, which included provisions for Affordable Dwelling Units, many units in the City that might have qualified as affordable housing fell into the category of “market-rate affordable”. The dedicated affordable units volunteered by the developers of The Moxley, Scout on the Circle, and West Wood Oaks are notable exceptions. This term is used to describe unsubsidized housing units that are priced below the area’s typical market rate. Typically, this means that the units are “affordable” relative to the surrounding market due to the age, location, size, and/or condition of the units themselves.

The City of Fairfax’s supply of for-sale “market-rate affordable” housing is largely comprised of single-family units in the City’s south and west neighborhoods (such as Fairchester, Westmore, and Warren Woods). Some can also be found in duplexes in the Ardmore neighborhood (a number of which are rented out to George Mason University students) and condominiums throughout the city.

Rental units that qualify as “market-rate affordable” are typically over 50 years old and many are clustered along Jermantown Road along the western border of the City. One-bedroom apartments in these properties, the details of which are provided in Exhibit 18, are currently listed around \$1,800 per month.

⁷ Scout on the Circle Floor Plans. <https://scoutonthecircle.com/floorplans/?range=0%2C4227>

⁸ The Moxley Apartment Floor Plans. <https://themoxleyapartments.securecafe.com/onlineleasing/the-moxley/floorplans.aspx>

⁹ Rental data for Hallman Street Apartments (12 units built in 1953) and George Mason University Apartments & Townhouses (36 units built in 1985) were not available.

Name	Year Built	Unit Count	Avg. Unit Size	Avg. 1-Bd Rent	Avg. 2-Bd Rent
Cardinal Ct.	1959	60	858 sq. ft.	\$1,550	\$1,780
Cavalier Ct.	1964	129	1,071 sq. ft.	\$1,772	\$2,195
Copperfield Sq.	1964	77	998 sq. ft.	\$1,824	\$2,296
Gainsborough Ct.	1967 ren. 1986	151	947 sq. ft.	\$1,810	\$2,028
Fairfax Sq.	1966	502	990 sq. ft.	\$1,923	\$2,114

Exhibit 18: Average Rent in Multifamily Market-Rate Affordable Rental Properties. Source: CoStar Multifamily Data.

Survey respondents recognize the need for more low- and middle-income housing options. When asked about their level of support for increasing the number of available housing options for three income brackets, 57% of respondents expressed support for additional low-income housing, 74% for middle-income housing. Only 30% wanted additional high-end housing, which will make up most of the new construction that has been proposed and approved.

Public Survey: Support for Increasing Housing Options by Income Level

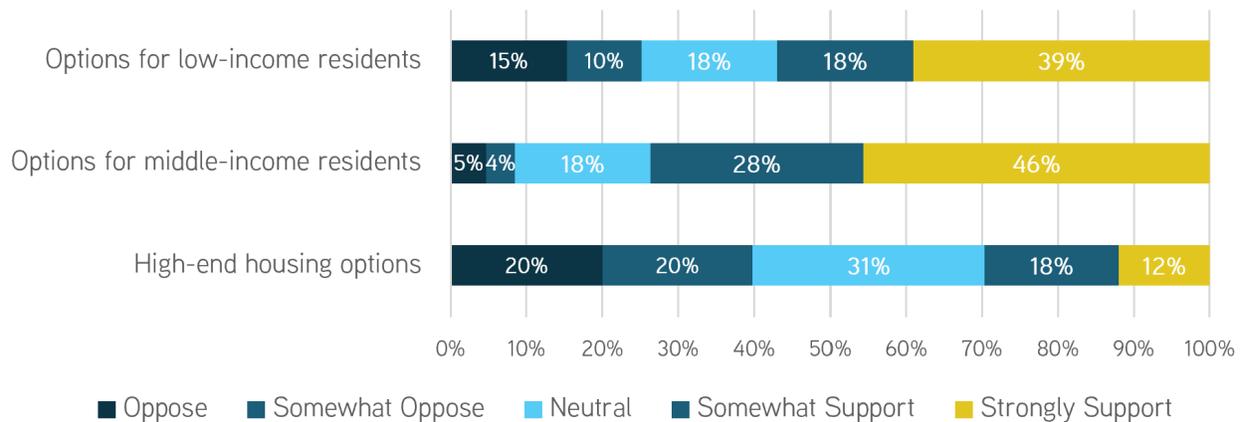


Exhibit 19: Support for Housing Options by Income Level. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance

The City of Fairfax has taken some important steps to ensure that future housing developments will include options for low- to middle-income households. Most new developments approved after June 2020 will be required to include a percentage of affordable housing due to a zoning amendment that promotes the creation of mixed-income housing. The Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance requires that new residential developments with a minimum of 30 units that are seeking rezoning, a special use permit, special exception, or have filed a site plan or subdivision provide:

- 10% affordable units for single-family developments (including detached, attached, townhouses, and duplexes); or
- 6% affordable units for multifamily development; and
- Affordable for-sale units for household incomes at 70% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI); or
- Affordable for-rent units for household incomes at 60% or less of the AMI.

Units are to retain their status as affordable for a 30-year period. Developers will receive a 20% density bonus for their adherence to the ordinance and have the option (under certain circumstances) to request approval of cash-in-lieu for up to 50% of required affordable units.



The Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance is an important step toward greater affordability in Fairfax, providing new, affordable units for residents of varying financial ability in the community.

Recent Loss of Market Rate Affordable Housing

Although recent efforts to prioritize redevelopment have increased the supply of housing in Fairfax, this recent surge in residential development has been costly. Many redevelopment projects have replaced significant portions of the City's affordable housing inventory. While relocation assistance has been offered in some instances to residents displaced by redevelopment, additional efforts must be made to maintain affordability in formerly market-rate affordable areas.

In most cases, the affordable housing stock which is being redeveloped is replaced with high-end housing. The Knolls on Main, demolished in 2016, offered 110 units with an average size of 784 sq. ft. This location is now home to a the 132-unit Mount Vineyard condo/townhome complex. One of the Mount Vineyard townhomes is currently listed for sale at 3,120 sq. ft. and \$975,900.¹⁰ A condo listed for rent in Mount Vineyard is 1,918 sq. ft. and is renting at \$3,500 per month.

The recently demolished Fairfax Gardens Apartments were built in 1959. These 38 market-rate affordable units were an average size of 882 sq. ft. The proposed redevelopment will include 42 new townhomes, 20 condominiums, and new commercial space.

In these cases, these redevelopment projects have created a gain in overall housing units for the City. However, since 2016, very few, if any, of these 148 lost affordable rental units have been replaced with comparably affordable options, creating additional pressure on Fairfax's population of low-to-moderate income residents to find available and safe housing.

¹⁰ <https://www.bexrealty.com/Virginia/Fairfax/Mount-Vineyard/>

One of the remaining market-rate affordable options in the City, the Layton Hall Apartments, is also slated for demolition as a redevelopment project has been approved for this location. These 110 apartments, built in 1960 and currently renting for an average of \$1,647, represent a dwindling number of market rate affordable options in the City. While these units are still occupied, there is concern that their demolition could further displace Fairfax residents as the City's supply of affordable housing continues to decline.

Dedicated Affordable Housing

Currently, Fairfax is home to 107 dedicated, affordable rental housing units. Of those, 48 are split between the new developments at Scout on the Circle and the Moxley. Roughly half of the City's supply of dedicated affordable rental housing, 54 units, are part of the West Wood Oaks Apartments complex, which was acquired and rehabilitated in 2012 with funding and assistance provided through a partnership with the Partners for Common Good community investment fund.

The West Wood Oaks Apartments are subsidized through HUD's Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC). Of the 54 units in the building, 39 are reserved for households earning up to 50% AMI and 15 units are for households making between 51% and 95% AMI. The initial affordability period for these units will expire in 2027 and the extended use period is set to expire in 2042. At this time there is no reason to believe that the units would return to market rate before the end of the extended period.

Construction of the Sutton Heights townhome development is ongoing as of this report, but 5 of the 50 proposed units will be reserved for affordable housing in accordance with the Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance (although the development was approved before the new policy was passed, developers EYA, LLC opted to comply with inclusion of these units).

Additionally, 64 units have been approved by the City Council for two sites in the City. Glebe View, which will begin construction at the Fairfax Presbyterian Church, will consist of eight for-sale townhomes for households with earnings between 40% and 80% AMI and two townhomes reserved for families participating in the Homestretch Program. The Homestretch Program is designed to help homeless families attain self-sufficiency. A partnership between the Fairfax Presbyterian Church, Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia (Habitat NOVA), Homestretch of Northern Virginia, and HomeAid National Capital Region will make this development possible.

The City of Fairfax also recently approved a Special Use Permit for a partnership between the Lamb Center and Wesley Housing to develop a residential/mixed-use community with 54 studio apartments to house residents with low-to-very low incomes (while committed to housing residents at 50% AMI or less, many serve households below 15% AMI). This is a part of an effort to meet a growing demand within the community for supportive housing. Wraparound support services will also be provided at the site.

Regional Unhoused Population

Rates of homelessness can be a key indicator of housing affordability in a region. While individuals can be without housing for a variety of reasons, large homeless populations can suggest that the market lacks housing options for low and very low-income residents.

Fairfax County saw an overall decrease in homeless populations pre-pandemic, but that number has since risen and surpassed pre-pandemic counts, especially of those in emergency shelters. In Fairfax City alone, the Lamb Center has seen a significant uptick in visitors in need of their services. May of 2023 saw an average of 112 visitors a day, a 19% increase from May of 2019, when the average was 96 visitors per day.

Fairfax County Government Point in Time Count 2013-2023

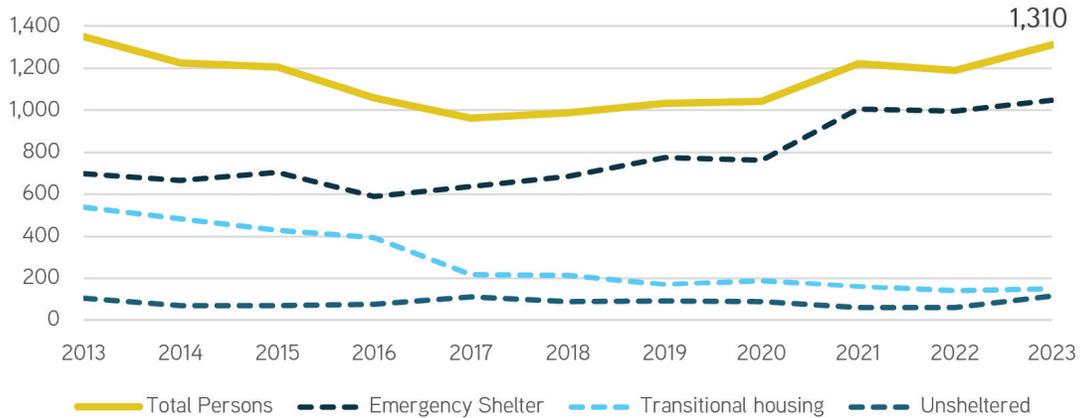


Exhibit 20: Fairfax County Point in Time Count

DEFINING “AFFORDABILITY” IN THE CITY OF FAIRFAX

As an affluent suburb within in the D.C. MSA, median monthly housing costs in the City of Fairfax (\$2,212) are significantly above the national average. Within the region, however, the City’s housing costs are on par with those of Fairfax County (\$2,220), despite having an estimated median household income of about \$15,000 lower than the county as a whole.¹¹

Despite the high median income, there are still many City residents who struggle to afford housing. The rising market rates for purchase and rental costs, in addition to the recent loss of affordable housing units, have placed a greater strain on many households and much of the local workforce.

COST BURDEN

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has established a national metric to determine the level of housing affordability. According to these metrics, households that spend more than 30% of their household income on housing costs (can include mortgage, rent, taxes, insurance, and/or utilities) are considered “cost burdened,” meaning that they “may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care.” Households spending more than 50% of their household income are considered “severely cost burdened.”

According to U.S. Census estimates, roughly 29% of the City’s households would be considered cost burdened. Broken down by tenure, roughly 20% of owner-occupied (O-O) households and 49% of renter-occupied (R-O) households spend over 30% of their household income on housing costs.

¹¹ Based on American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates.

	% Cost-burdened	% Severely Cost-burdened
Total households	28.87%	15.76%
Owner-Occupied households with a mortgage	22.37%	8.43%
Owner-Occupied households without a mortgage	14.53%	10.04%
Renter-Occupied households	48.82%	32.16%

Exhibit 21: Percent of Cost Burdened Households in the City of Fairfax. Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates.

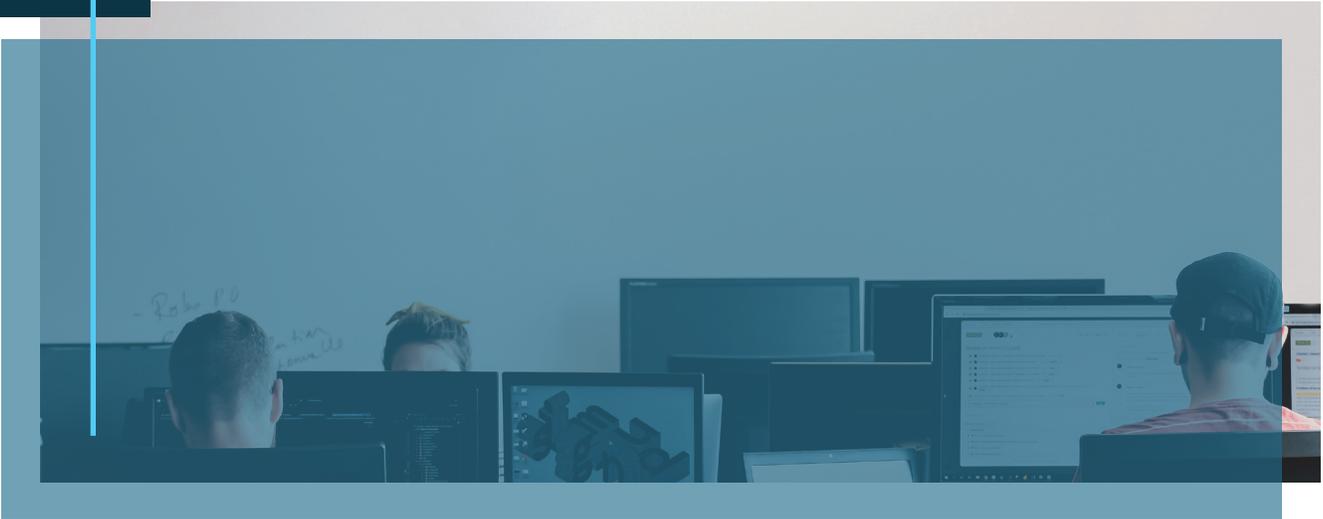
According to the U.S. Census estimates, the 2021 Median Household Income (MHHI) for the City of Fairfax was \$118,492 per year (\$133,845 for Fairfax County). Using this MHHI estimate, Exhibit 22 breaks down local income brackets along with the maximum housing cost threshold for housing cost burden. These figures use the City’s estimated MHHI, not the Area Median Income (AMI) metric that is used by HUD and the City’s Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance to set affordability thresholds. The Area Median Income limits are higher than those presented here.

	Annual Income	Monthly Income	Monthly Cost Burden Threshold
MHHI	\$118,492.00	\$9,874.33	\$2,962.30
120% MHHI	\$142,190.40	\$11,849.20	\$3,554.76
80% MHHI	\$94,793.60	\$7,889.47	\$2,369.84
60% MHHI	\$71,095.20	\$5,924.60	\$1,777.38
30% MHHI	\$35,547.60	\$2,962.30	\$888.69

Exhibit 22: City of Fairfax Cost Monthly Cost Burden Thresholds by Income Bracket. Source: ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates.

Workforce Affordability Analysis

The City of Fairfax is home to a largely affluent population, but the entire community relies on services that are provided by lower- and middle-income workers. Having limited housing options for these essential workers can put the availability of these services at risk, especially in a tight labor market. A vibrant and sustainable community has a wide mix of housing options to ensure that everyone who wants to work in the area has options to live near their jobs; but the current housing environment in the City of Fairfax is making it hard for some members of the community to find housing they can afford.



Earnings for Common Occupations and Growth Industries

Fairfax County is home to many high-income earners, and many of the most common occupations in the area do generate incomes that allow them to afford housing in the City. However, many of the fastest growing occupations do not provide workers with enough income to afford nearby housing options. Exhibit 23 displays the median annual earnings for the ten most common occupations in Fairfax County.

Occupation	# of Jobs 2022	Median Annual Earnings
Software & Web Developers, Programmers, and Testers	40,270	\$135,257
Management Analysts	24,760	\$116,218
Building Cleaning Workers	18,603	\$33,316
General & Operations Managers	17,351	\$150,227
Laborers & Material Movers	15,135	\$41,606
Computer & Information Analysts	14,785	\$133,706
Accountants & Auditors	13,574	\$96,420
Retail Salespersons	13,157	\$36,343
Database & Network Administrators & Architects	13,001	\$134,688
Office Clerks, General	12,238	\$44,815

Exhibit 23: Most Common Occupation in Fairfax County in 2022. Source: Lightcast.

Exhibit 24 displays the fastest-growing occupations in Fairfax County over the past five years.

Occupation	# of Jobs 2022	Employment Growth (2017-2022)	Median Annual Earnings
Software & Web Developers, Programmers, and Testers	40,270	8,907	\$135,257
Management Analysts	24,760	6,877	\$116,218
General & Operations Managers	17,351	6,547	\$150,227
Misc. Business Operations Specialists	9,689	5,259	\$96,569
Logistics & Project Management Specialists	10,110	4,460	\$116,875
Home Health & Personal Care Aides	10,522	2,918	\$29,558
Driver/Sales Workers & Truck Drivers	9,933	2,339	\$44,116
Human Resources Workers	7,551	2,107	\$87,003
Cooks	8,912	1,790	\$36,682
Postsecondary Teachers	5,146	1,710	\$78,761

Exhibit 24: Top Growth Occupations in Fairfax County 2017-2022. Source: Lightcast.

Services and Essential Workers

Workers in retail sales, food preparation, and service positions are less likely to be able to afford to live and work in the City of Fairfax, which can put a strain on those businesses. Workers of other occupations are likely affected by the limited availability of affordable housing, too. For example, a disparity can be seen in comparing the salaries of teachers, police, and firefighters to the City's median rent. These data support the anecdotal evidence shared with the project team; many report that essential workers have to commute an hour or more to reach their jobs in the City.

Based on publicly available earnings data, first-year teachers would need to spend roughly 47% of their income to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Fairfax. Even teachers in their tenth year of service would be considered cost-burdened – and that's only considering their housing costs associated with rent.

Percent of Monthly Income for Median Contract Rent in Fairfax/Oakton Submarket

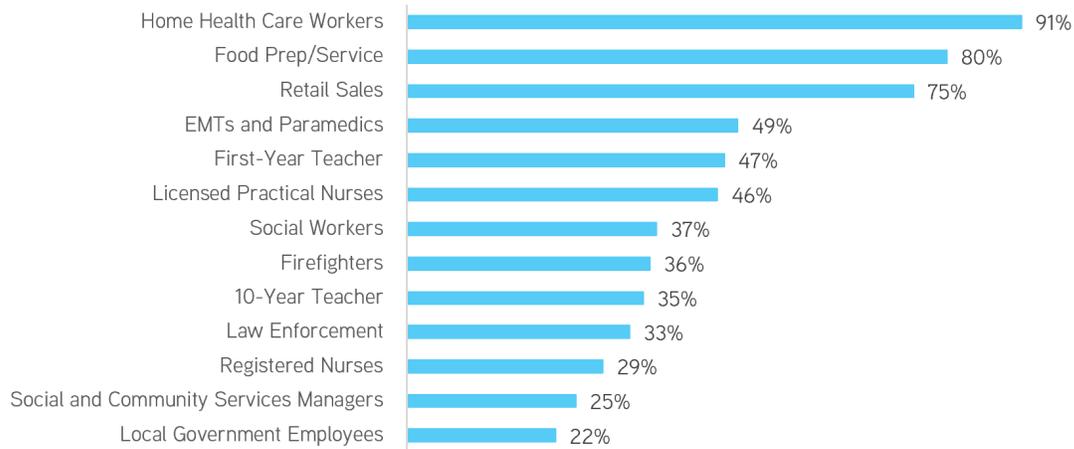


Exhibit 25: Percent of Monthly Income for Contract Rent in Fairfax/Oakton Submarket. Source: Lightcast, ACS 2021 5-Year Estimates.

Failure to staff these critical positions can put public safety at risk; the responsiveness of critical social and health services depends upon the availability of nearby affordable housing. The City’s aging population is likely to need increased support in the coming years, and the lack of social and community service professionals, nurses, and/or home health workers could have disastrous impact on the lives of residents.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

DEDICATED HOUSING STAFF AND WEBSITE

Many programs focused on the creation, maintenance, or assistance for affordable housing require dedicated staffing and resources. Even in cases in which tax credit programs, for example, are managed through a third-party (such as Fairfax County), city departments and staffing must have the capacity to work closely with these entities to ensure that local needs are being met.

Best Practice

Dedicated Housing Staff and Website; Davidson, NC

Many communities are responding to growing affordability issues by dedicating staff and resources to developing and managing affordable housing programs. The size of these departments is often only 2-3 people, but their responsibilities are tied directly to housing programs and services. Websites offering information about programs and resources also help to collect this information in a single place for residents.

DEDICATED FUNDING FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Programming to ensure the availability of affordable housing often requires a commitment of capital from local government agencies. This capital may be sourced a number of ways, including local taxes and development contributions. The City of Fairfax has taken steps towards establishing a Housing Trust Fund, although its balance is small and beneficiaries have not yet been identified.

Affordable Housing Trust Funds

Housing trust funds serve through the city, county, or state level to address local priorities and housing needs. Affordable housing trust funds are preferably created from a dedicated revenue source that is established in partnership with stakeholders. This funding is not restricted, like typical federal funds, and allows for local government to use the funds for whatever is needed and agreed upon within the community.

There are multiple considerations for creating a housing trust fund. Some entity must be responsible for managing it; this could be a public office, nonprofit, or a new managing entity. The managing entity must determine how to structure the application process, application evaluation, and the awarding of funds. First, though, reliable funding sources must be identified. There are several sources from which the funds can be acquired; the best options will depend upon the community and its needs.

Best Practice

Affordable Housing Trust; Somerville, MA

The Somerville Affordable Housing Trust creates programming which maintains and grows the affordable housing stock in the region. There are nine Trustees that oversee the Trust. Sources of revenue include linkage payments, inclusionary zoning payments, and Community Preservation Act funds. The Trust offers development loans, loans to individuals for closing cost assistance, a tenancy stabilization program, and other program grants.

PRESERVATION OF EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Over the past decade, affordable housing units in Fairfax have been lost at a higher rate than they have been added. This has limited low-income residents' and workers' ability to find and/or maintain housing in the City of Fairfax.



Targeted programming, including strategic monitoring, is likely needed to preserve affordable housing, requiring the leadership of local government agencies and strong partnerships with community stakeholders.

Preservation Inventories

Some communities rigorously track and monitor available affordable housing through the use of [preservation inventories](#). These inventories include existing affordable properties as well as information on subsidies, income restrictions, age, condition, number of units (for multifamily developments), and more. Tracking this data may allow a community to preserve its affordable housing stock by intervening to maintain the condition of affordable units, strategizing to replace lost affordable units, or strategizing to maintain the affordability of units with insufficient or expiring restrictions.

Affordable housing preservation inventories must be created strategically with local goals and maintenance needs in mind. Most communities will generate utility from a preservation inventory by maintaining the inventory regularly so as to identify any trends or changes, but some communities may create an inventory to produce a one-time snapshot or baseline measurement of their affordable housing stock and update the inventory as resources allow.

Best Practices

Multifamily Reinvestment Study; Arlington, VA

Originally the Arlington Housing Conservation District, Arlington's Multifamily Reinvestment Study was developed in response to a steep decline in affordable housing since 2000. The study identified and was instrumental in the preservation of existing affordable housing, as well as the development of tools to create additional affordable units.

Affordable Housing Preservation Program and Task Force; Fairfax County, VA

To aid in the goal of producing affordable housing, Fairfax County's Board set a goal of no net loss of affordable housing. The Task Force was formed in July 2020, and has been charged with addressing the following: definitions for the types of preservation that can occur in communities, typology of properties at risk and characteristics to guide prioritizing properties or neighborhoods in need of action sooner, and a comprehensive set of preservation strategies that includes recommended policies and tools to achieve the goal of no net loss of affordability. Their [recommendations are listed here](#).

LAND TRUSTS AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

In some cases, [publicly-owned or donated land](#) can be made available to community partners for the development of affordable housing. These developments may be entirely affordable housing or include affordable units in addition to market rate units. Land may be made available to developers at no cost, at a discount, or at market rate depending on market conditions, local need, and projected performance of the development.

Public-private partnerships to provide affordable housing may be appropriate for communities with little available land for development, or high land costs that drive up average housing costs. A range of publicly owned land may be suitable for development, including vacant buildings, excess space on already-utilized lots, underutilized surface parking areas, and more.

Land Trusts

[Community land trusts](#) (CLTs) are mechanisms through which communities can ensure continued access to affordable housing and create paths to affordable home ownership.

Under a typical CLT structure, land will be owned and maintained by an organization focused on preserving access to affordable housing, and the structures on the land will be sold to residents. Affordability is maintained because homeowners purchase the structure only, and typically lease the land for a low monthly fee. Additionally, covenants may be in place restricting the future sale of CLT housing to those making a certain percent of area median income, or limiting the rate at which the cost of the housing may appreciate.

CLTs typically rely on partnerships with local government and community groups to establish themselves in a community. Local governments may ensure that ordinances accommodate the CLT structure, help to identify potential homebuyers for CLT homes, and provide resources to offset the costs associated with providing affordable pathways to home ownership.

Best Practices

Central Ohio Community Land Trust; Columbus, OH

The City of Columbus, OH and Franklin County asked the voters to pass a bond to create a dedicated fund for the construction of affordable housing in response to the rapid population boom and subsequent spike in housing costs. [A recent article discussed the success of the Community Land Trust program](#) in producing homes to be sold at around \$150,000 less than comparable homes in their neighborhoods. The redevelopment opportunities were made shovel-ready with demolition grant funding.

Glebe View; Fairfax, VA

Glebe View is a recently approved affordable housing project through a partnership between Fairfax Presbyterian Church, Habitat for Humanity of Northern Virginia, Homestretch, and HomeAid. Ten affordable townhomes will be built on the church property, which is leasing the land to be developed with eight for-sale units for households with incomes in the 40%-80% AMI range. The remaining two townhomes will be managed by Homestretch, Inc. (an organization dedicated to assisting homeless families in attaining self-sufficiency) and will house families for an estimated two-year period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Evaluate capacity of existing city staff and departments to develop and administer affordable housing programs and meet Comprehensive Plan objectives and determine if additional staff resources are needed
- Work to identify or create a dedicated, annual sources of funding to devote to the creation of affordable housing programs
- Expand collaboration and programming with the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- Consider strategies for replacing lost affordable housing options
- Develop programs to support maintenance of existing affordable housing options
- Explore the utilization of publicly-owned lands through Community Land Trusts to develop affordable housing
- Continue to seek out public-private partnerships to develop affordable housing
- Explore opportunities to expand housing options for residents with extremely low household incomes, e.g. less than 30% AMI

FOCUS AREA: ACCESSIBILITY AND SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS

INTRODUCTION

Senior residents and residents with disabilities are key demographics in determining the housing needs and preferences for future development in the City of Fairfax. Fairfax seniors are expected to make up over 20% of the city’s residents by 2030, and as many as 1 in 4 adults in the US live with some type of disability. Research and engagement revealed a variety of preferred options for aging-in-place and accessibility not currently available in the city.

RATIONALE

AGING POPULATION

While the region has seen significant growth in recent years, the City of Fairfax’s population has grown relatively slowly. The Washington-Arlington-Alexandria MSA saw a population increase of approximately 17% between 2010 and 2021, while the City of Fairfax saw a little over 8%. The city is expected to continue seeing similar growth.

Key in the coming years’ population growth forecast is Fairfax’s rising proportion of seniors. The City of Fairfax is aging rapidly, alongside many of its counterparts across the country. Individuals 65 and older are expected to make up 19% of the population by 2027, a 3% increase from 2022.

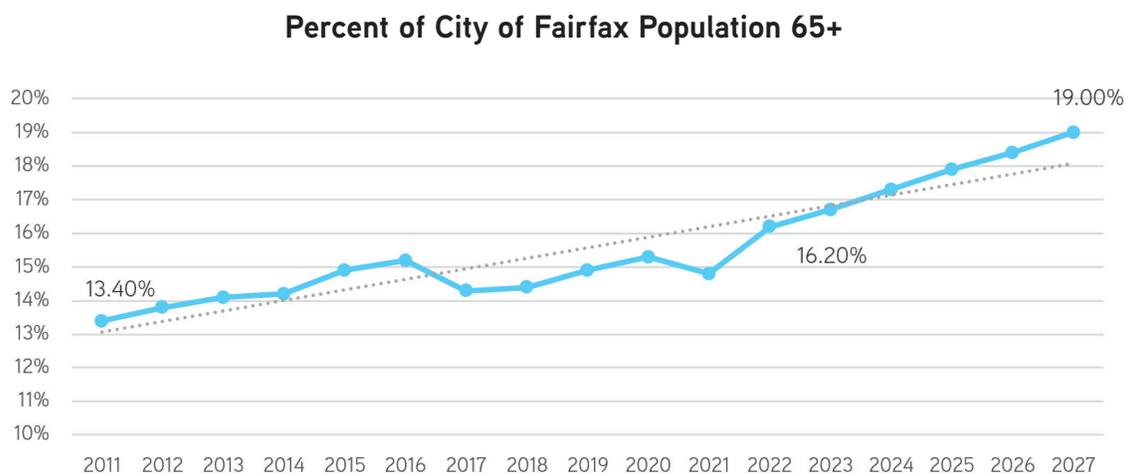


Exhibit 26: Recent and Projected Percent of Population Over the Age of 65 Years in the City of Fairfax. Sources: ACS 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021, ESRI Population Projections.

GAPS IN SENIOR HOUSING

It’s important to recognize that expanded housing for seniors involves more than assisted living or age-restricted housing. Survey responses showed broad interest in expanding the supply of single-level housing, smaller homes to support the preferences for downsizing, and accessory dwelling units.

Public Survey: Senior Housing Top Priorities, Percent Agreement Among Respondents

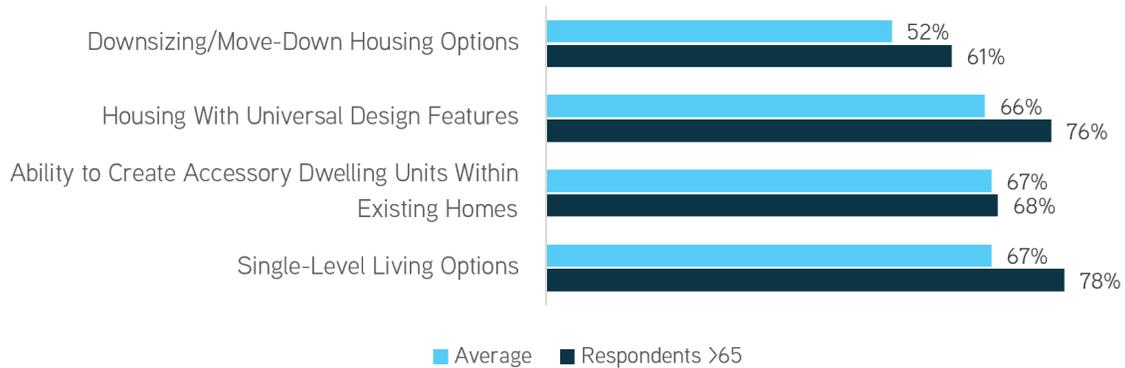


Exhibit 27: Senior Housing Top Priorities. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

The ability for residents to downsize and age-in-place supports senior needs while also expanding the available housing supply. In 2019, [The Joint Center for Housing Studies](#) found that one-third of all senior households are cost-burdened, with renters struggling at a higher rate than owners (54% compared to 24%). To develop housing for residents at every stage of the housing lifecycle serves to increase affordability across the market, but it specifically relieves some financial burden on senior households.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING NEEDS

Survey results showcased a desire for more accessible design features in housing. It’s important to keep in mind that seniors are not the only population that will face housing barriers due to disability. Universal design features help meet a wide range of accessibility and care needs. These design standards currently exist in six affordable rental units in the West Wood Oaks Apartments; they should continue to be required in a percentage of both market rate and dedicated affordable units.

Public Survey: Agreement That Fairfax Needs More Housing With Universal Design Features by Age Group

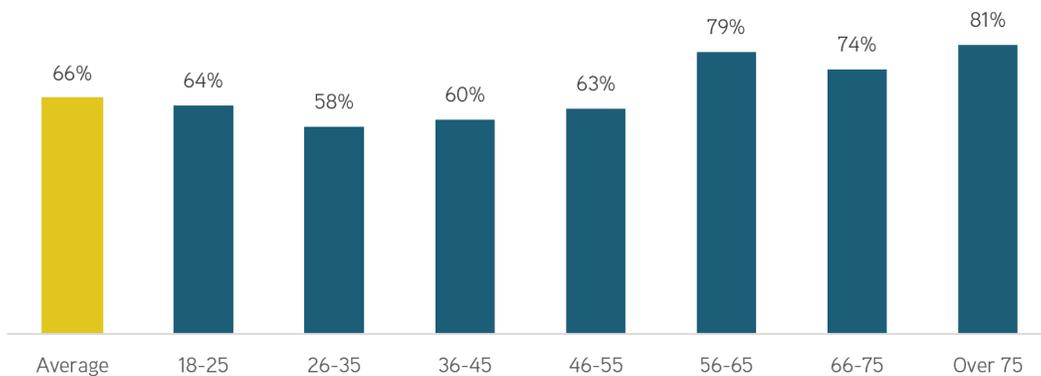


Exhibit 28: Universal Design Feature Support. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

INCREASING DOWNSIZING OPTIONS

Increasing downsizing options is a key part of building up the city's housing supply, diversifying the housing mix, as well as meeting the needs of seniors and people with disabilities. Downsizing allows for senior households to access smaller and more affordable options to overcome both accessibility and financial barriers they may be facing in their current homes. Options should focus on single-level, smaller housing units, and can be either attached or detached. In addition to the usual options, accessory dwelling units and cottage communities can help fill this niche, as well as aid in providing the potential support needs of seniors. Adding these housing options benefits the housing market in many ways beyond serving the senior demographic. Allowing for downsizing also frees up valuable housing for new entrants to the local market, which serves to support a healthy, more complete housing lifecycle.

Accessory Dwelling Units

See Accessory Dwelling Units in Focus Area: Housing Mix, page 25.

Cottage Communities

See Cottage Communities in Focus Area: Housing Mix, page 26.

IMPROVING ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Improving accessible housing goes hand in hand with increasing access to accessory dwelling units and downsizing options goes a step further in its attention to the specific needs of those with disabilities. Because of the wide range of disabilities individuals face, accessible housing can involve a variety of options. The most common, however, focus on those with mobility impairments. Single-level living and the inclusion of universal design features in housing developments both provide options that meet the needs of a wide range of disabled residents, both current and future.

Single-Level Living

Single-level living options are important for an aging population. Only a small number of seniors move to age-restricted, assisted living, nursing home, or extended care communities and options for comfortable and safe living are paramount to allow residents to age-in-place. Requirements for percentages of new developments to include some single-level living options could improve the housing mix and options for seniors to remain in the city once their existing housing becomes difficult to manage due to health or mobility concerns.

Universal Design

Universal design is usable by all people, no matter their age, ability, or other factors. It easily addresses common barriers by making small changes that can greatly impact how people are able to function within a given space.

Universal design is meant for all people to be able to access and utilize a space without special accommodations or design processes. Common features may include no-step entry, one-story living, wide doorways and hallways, and extra floor space. The focus is freedom for easy movement and safe spaces for all people. Additional aspects may include floors and bathtubs with non-slip surfaces, thresholds that are flush with the floor, good lighting, lever door handles, and rocker light switches. All of these options work for people who may require different types of assistance to maneuver through daily life.

Best Practices

Universal Design in Housing: Age in Action

Two studies were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of universal design. The first took place at Lighthouse International's Manhattan headquarters, which primarily serves people with visual impairments. Measurements to rate the participants' perceptions and the observed performance of environment-specific activities were used. The study concluded that participants found the building to be more usable when compared to other buildings. The second study took place in three fast food restaurants; one was a Universally Designed restaurant, another was an ADAAG compliant restaurant, and the third an ADAAG non-compliant restaurant. The study confirmed that a universally designed building was more usable when compared to other non-universally designed buildings.

The Place in Aging in Place: Housing Equity in Late Life; Joint Center for Housing Studies

Aging in place has become more important as a large amount of the population is over the age of 65. According to the study, housing plays a huge role in the impact on health. As such, there should be renewed focus on ensuring appropriate "zoning, planning, and building or remodeling housing stock that is affordable, accessible, and livable" – a good fit, with proximity to transportation, services, and opportunities for social engagement" through policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand permissions for Accessory Dwelling Units
- Encourage development of a variety of unit sizes and types to fill gaps in housing life cycle needs, including low-maintenance, single-level living options
- Consider revising policy/standards to accommodate cottage communities and smaller detached homes
- Require universal design features in new developments, especially affordable housing projects

FOCUS AREA: FAIRFAX AS A PLACE

INTRODUCTION

The City of Fairfax is home to a vibrant and diverse population at all stages of life and with a variety of priorities and housing needs. Common to them all, however, is the need for a community that is welcoming, connected, and resilient. Housing development goes beyond meeting supply, mix, and financial needs. It involves designing spaces that foster community inclusion with access to public green spaces, amenities, and environments that are sustainable and encourage residents to feel a sense of place in their city.

Fairfax has the opportunity to pursue this goal in a variety of ways. Each of the Small Area Plans places an emphasis on this type of place-making through walkability and connectivity and permitting the City to develop in line with the priorities voiced by residents across demographic groups.

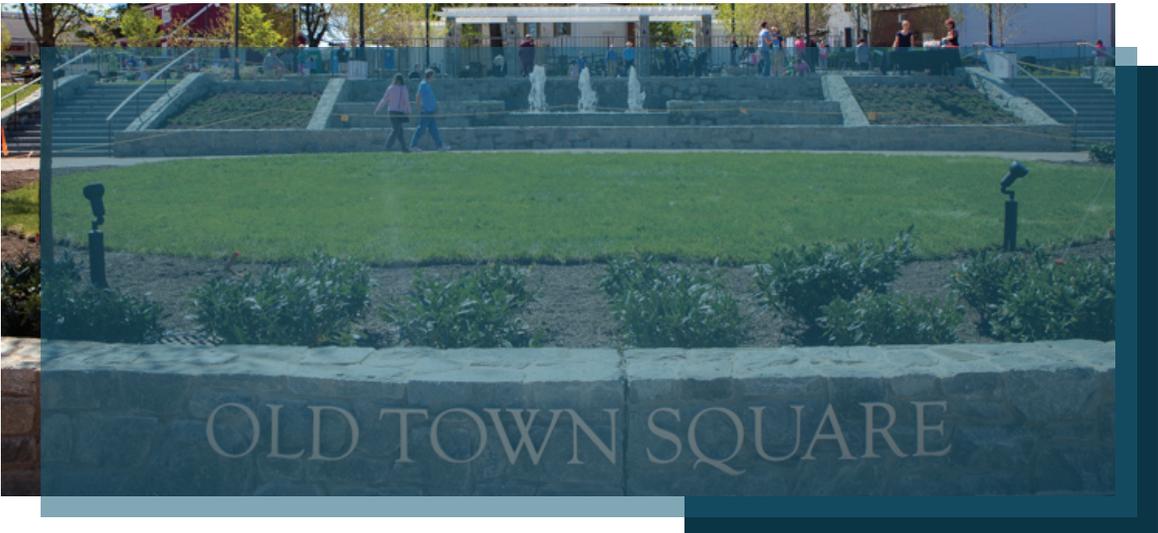
RATIONALE

PRESERVING FAIRFAX’S HISTORIC CHARACTER

As many residents shared through workshops and survey responses, maintaining the unique and historic character of Fairfax is a top priority when thinking about how the City should continue to evolve in the coming years. Many of these concerns centered around keeping trees and green spaces intact and limiting changes to the City’s single-family neighborhoods.

As has already been discussed, the dedication of Activity Centers puts the City in the favorable position of adding housing options and variety while limiting the impact on the neighborhoods that many feel are central to the identity and character of Fairfax. All but one of the City’s designated Activity Centers exist at the periphery of the jurisdictional boundaries, allowing for limited impact on the more central single-family neighborhoods.

The one exception is the Old Town Fairfax Activity Center, which is home to Fairfax’s Historic District. In keeping with the plans outlined in the Old Town Fairfax Small Area Plan, much of this area should remain a cultural focal point with walkable and communal spaces. However, options exist for using this district to expand and diversify the City’s housing stock. One recommendation would be to adjust existing land use policies to allow for cottage communities in Old Town Fairfax.



Cottage communities are typically characterized by a cluster of smaller, single-family homes that include communal green spaces and sometimes shared amenities. Because they are smaller detached homes, they can be designed to match the aesthetics and designs of the surrounding structures, including those with historic preservation guidelines, while allowing for slight increases in residential density due to permissions for more units-per-acre.

These smaller homes can help to fill a variety of needs across the housing life cycle as they often suit the needs of first-time homebuyers and downsizing seniors alike. These communities often offer more limited maintenance than a standard single-family detached home and can be designed with single-level living and accessibility features in mind.



Location in the Old Town Fairfax Activity Center would allow cottage community residents to take advantage of the access to the Small Area Plan’s recommended Arts Walk and/or other communal spaces that are central to maintaining the City’s cultural heritage.

GREEN SPACES AND WALKABILITY

While green and connected spaces are important features of the Old Town Fairfax Small Area Plan, the preservation and expansion of Fairfax’s green spaces is an expressed priority for residents throughout the City. Many residents signaled support for requiring usable green space in all new developments.

Public Survey: Support for Requiring Usable Green Spaces in New Development

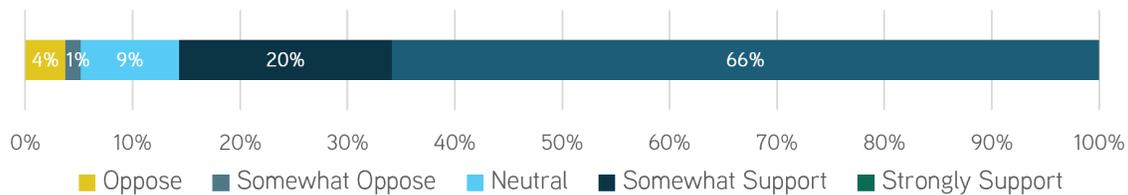


Exhibit 29: Support for Usable Greenspaces. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey

The City of Fairfax has a current walk score of 54, which classifies it as “somewhat walkable”. This means that some errands can be accomplished on foot, but most require a vehicle. In terms of green spaces, the city boasts over 258 acres of park land made up of 25 parks alongside 28 miles of trails, as well as additional recreational areas. Access to these parks and trails remains a priority for Fairfax residents, as expressed through their ranking of features that they would look for when considering a new home.

Public Survey: Importance of Green Spaces and Sidewalk Access in Future Home

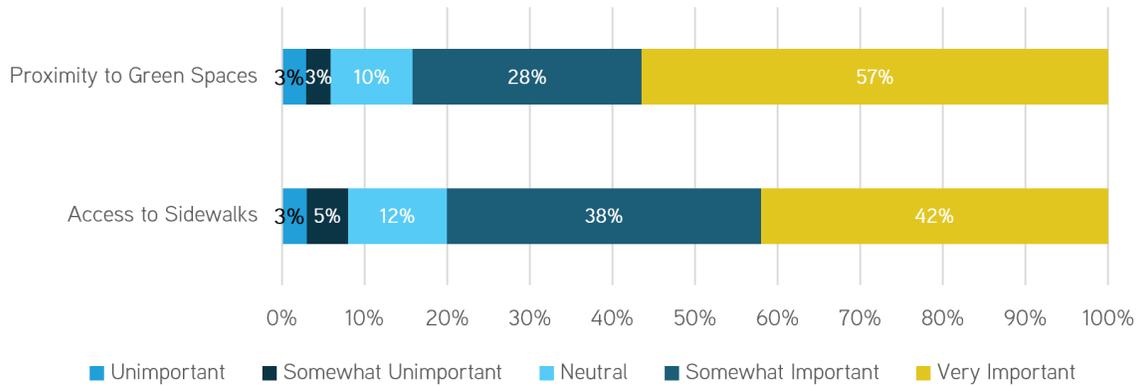


Exhibit 28: Universal Design Feature Support. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

These preferences appear in survey responses throughout all age groups, indicating that prioritizing these features throughout new developments will help to keep existing residents satisfied while potentially attracting a wider demographic to the area.

Improving a community’s walkability and incorporating mixed-use development with green spaces also serves to reduce traffic congestion. Mixed-use areas reduce the distance residents need to travel to access amenities, and sidewalks that improve connectivity reduce the need to use a vehicle to travel. This can be especially beneficial for younger residents who might be less likely to own a car.

The city finalized a Multimodal Transportation Plan in 2017 and the CUE Transit Development Plan in 2016, with goals to improve safety, mobility, and public transit access throughout the city. As of the release of this report, the City lists 3 projects as under construction and an additional 5 that have funding established. Projects include sidewalk construction and expansion, street connections and expansion, trail installation, bus stop improvements, and bike lane installations. These improvements and others like them enhance the quality of life for Fairfax residents; they also meet the accessory priorities that potential residents look for when making housing decisions for themselves and their families.

PREFERENCES FOR YOUNG ADULTS OR RECENT GRADS

Just as the senior and aging population are an important demographic to consider in meeting the current and long-term housing needs for Fairfax residents, young adults are a key group whose preferences will continue to shape many aspects of the city for decades to come.

According to a 2023 study by the Pew Research Center, adults under the age of 30 are increasingly likely to prefer smaller and more densely constructed homes with walkable access to amenities despite the fact that a majority of Americans continue to prefer larger, less densely constructed homes with less walkability. Individuals between 18 and 35 also show a higher propensity to rent and live in urban areas. They place a higher priority on sustainability, environmentally friendly and energy-efficient housing options. They also value walkable access to public transit. Survey responses from Fairfax residents in this age group reflect these priorities.

**Public Survey: Top 5 Future Housing Priorities for
Respondents 18-35 Years Old**
(% respondents ranking category as important or somewhat important)

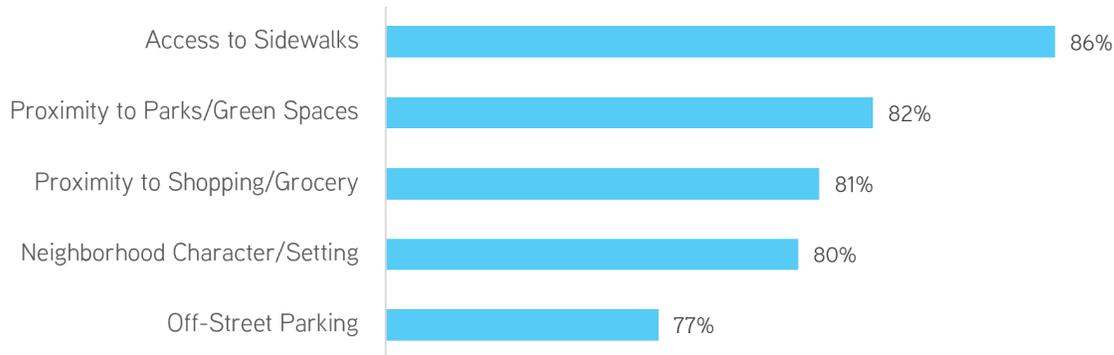


Exhibit 31: Top Housing Priorities for Respondents 18-35 Years Old. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

The Activity Center at Northfax offers an ideal location for development that targets this audience by creating a destination centered on walkability, social and communal spaces, and access to restaurants and shopping. Mixed-use development provides a perfect opportunity to incorporate these aspects into a vibrant and desirable neighborhood. Combining for-rent and for-sale residential options with commercial development and green spaces creates community destinations that embody the “live, work, play” ideal.

These features will help serve existing Fairfax residents’ needs while also attracting both George Mason students with ease of access from the South and visitors to the area through its proximity to the interstate. In line with the Small Area Plan for Northfax, design for developments in this area should prioritize green and communal spaces in addition to connectivity with parks and trails.

Mixed-use development should also be considered in the Kamp Washington and Fairfax Circle, where added density can work in concert with public transportation to target commuters and provide additional opportunities for residents in need of affordable options. Positioned as gateways to the City from the east and west, steering development in these Activity Centers can offer a wide range of impacts, including serving as transitional spaces between Fairfax’s single-family neighborhoods and the areas just beyond the City’s boundaries. These Activity Centers would be ideal spaces for denser multi-family developments that follow best practices for housing near transportation hubs.

BALANCING COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL, AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

Oftentimes, the idea of transitioning commercial properties to residential ones can lead to concerns about loss of tax revenues. Mixed-use development addresses this issue by largely avoiding the loss of commercial real estate. Residential development often builds up from commercial, leaving ground level space for businesses while simultaneously increasing the housing supply. Fairfax residents showed support for both replacing some commercial spaces with residential, as well as pursuing additional mixed-use development, especially among younger residents.

Public Survey: Support for Development Impacting Existing Commercial Space

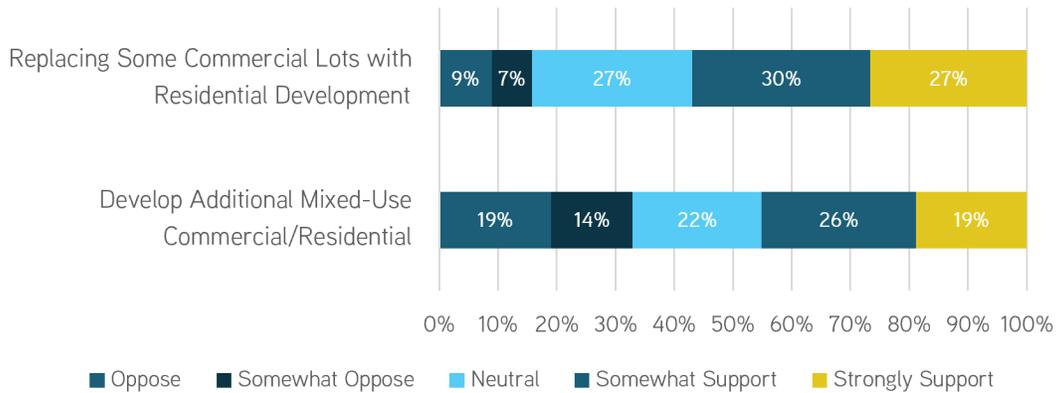


Exhibit 32: Support for Development Impacting Commercial Space. Source: City of Fairfax Housing Survey.

Despite the benefits that can arise from increasing mixed-use developments in the City, there are still opportunities within some Activity Centers for dedicated commercial uses that are not immediately connected to residential development. The Pickett & Main Activity Center sits in the southeast corner of Fairfax. It is home to several commercial/retail shopping centers and a portion of the City’s industrial areas, the largest of which sits just to the north of Pickett & Main Activity Center and is home to the CITGO Petroleum terminal. Pickett & Main is scheduled to be the last of the City’s five Activity Centers to receive a Small Area Plan and some anecdotal reports suggest that this area may be treated with a “wait-and-see” approach to determine its best uses moving forward. No submissions or approval for any development projects are currently underway for this location. As such, it is recommended that some of the future uses for this location be determined at a later date when the impacts of the first four SAPs have begun to set in. This would allow one of the Activity Centers to respond to needs that might arise in the near- or mid-term future.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Fairfax has a distinct feel and sense of place based on the region’s history and historic development patterns. As Fairfax and the surrounding region grow, care must be taken to ensure that housing and accompanying developments retain what is unique to the city and region while ensuring that the community is inclusive of and accessible to all.

The following focus areas may be emphasized as important elements of a community with pockets of density and a vibrant community life. Although these focuses extend beyond housing, their contribution to urban design and marketing serves Fairfax’s vision for future housing development. Most items described below are currently being planned as part of the Activity Center initiative, but this plan encourages a sustained emphasis on the implementation of these items.

HIGH-DENSITY, MIXED-USE DESTINATIONS

Although increased density is the key tool used to address population growth, rising housing costs, and limited developable land, it represents a departure from Fairfax’s traditional, single family residential makeup. Some stakeholders approach this change in density in identified Activity Centers and sites approved for increased density with apprehension, citing concerns that increased density may threaten the established culture, or “sense of place.”

Dense communities that can accommodate residents at a variety of income levels have proven their economic and environmental benefits, and increased density will likely be essential should Fairfax wish to attract and retain workers whose contributions sustain education, public safety, service, and local government infrastructure. Still, longtime residents who are apprehensive about changes to Fairfax’s built environment and those new to Fairfax should hope to see increased density accompanied by increased access to amenities, mixed use developments, improved walkability, public green spaces, and thoughtful design that contributes to a shared culture and sense of place.

Best Practice

Arts and Design District; Carmel, IN

Over the past two decades, the population of Carmel, Indiana – an affluent suburb of Indianapolis – has nearly tripled. The city has integrated several apartment buildings and commercial spaces in a strategic and central downtown location surrounded by its traditional single-family residential neighborhoods. This increased density, and the infrastructure and amenities it has included, has allowed Carmel to attract young professionals and young families while retaining its original residents and the elements of the community that they value.¹²

WALKABILITY/LIMITING TRAFFIC

Walkability is an essential part of ensuring that dense communities are good places to live. In addition to preventing traffic congestion, walkability and other forms of multimodal transit have public health and public safety benefits and can contribute to beautification and vibrancy. Fairfax currently includes plans to improve walkability in the existing small area plans and should ensure that improvements prioritize multimodal transit access in and to commercial areas.

Improvements to walkability and other forms of multimodal transit may also help to enhance the “sense of place” that will be a critical accompaniment to increased density. Enhanced walkability has been shown to be associated with social benefits often attributed to community integration and familiarity with neighbors. Infrastructure that encourages residents to be outside, seeing neighbors face-to-face, may allow residents to embrace increased density and the amenities it brings rather than view new neighbors as a threat to the status quo.

Best Practice

Midtown District, Carmel, IN

Carmel, Indiana, described above, has incorporated multimodal transit options in its downtown redevelopment in a strategic and highly successful way. The main thoroughfare through the small downtown, which includes several commercial spaces in mixed-use developments as well as a shared greenspace, is not a road for

¹² “What Carmel, Indiana can teach America about urbanism.” The Economist. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2022/09/29/what-carmel-indiana-can-teach-america-about-urbanism>

cars, but rather an expanded segment of the Monon Trail. The Monon is a 27-mile walking, running, and cycling trail that begins in downtown Indianapolis. The trail allows visitors and residents to patronize local businesses and easily access amenities on foot or bike, as well as routing trail users through the downtown.

SHARED COMMUNITY GREENSPACES

Accessible, maintained, shared greenspaces can contribute to a shared culture and sense of place by encouraging socialization and outdoor activity. Shared greenspaces may also help to address concerns related to the aesthetics of increased housing density. In addition, they can beautify pockets of density where residents don't have lawns or private greenspace, and even serve as venues for community events, encouraging community engagement.

Green space and the social environment influence the quality of life for a person, which can be assessed through measures of social cohesion. Social cohesion has been positively linked to green space. One example is the social interactions that come with green space, such as at a park. Ultimately, "the presence of urban green spaces can encourage positive social interactions that cultivate social cohesion in ways that enhance health and well-being."¹³

FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT TO ATTRACT YOUNGER RESIDENTS

Residents of all ages are important to a healthy housing landscape, to encourage appropriate turnover and movement throughout different types of housing units. Just as aging seniors need options for move-down housing, young families may wish to move into single-family homes, and young, single residents may prefer a one-bedroom apartment. The accommodation of residents of all life cycle stages relies upon the availability of a variety of housing types. Additionally, younger residents must be attracted to Fairfax to ensure continued growth. This will likely require a concerted effort to invest in amenities that are important to young people, such as access to bars and restaurants, entertainment, recreation, walkability, and affordability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adjust zoning in Activity Centers around high-density, mixed-use development
- Identify Activity Center(s) with locations most likely to attract students and recent graduates and focus development around these target markets
- Identify areas of the city for possible cottage communities both within and beyond Activity Center boundaries that are connected and accessible through trails, etc.

¹² Jennings, V and Bamkole, O. Social Cohesion and Green Space. National Center for Biotechnology Information

RECOMMENDATIONS LIST

HOUSING SUPPLY

- Continue to promote residential development within Activity Centers
- Identify areas to replace existing commercial with residential development.
- Ensure a healthy mixture of for-sale and for-rent units are included in new developments.

HOUSING MIX

- Consider a variety of uses in planning/rezoning for Activity Center development.
- Expand permissions for Accessory Dwelling Units
- Encourage development of a variety of unit sizes and types to fill gaps in housing life cycle stages.
- Consider revising policy/standards to accommodate cottage communities and smaller detached homes.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

- Evaluate capacity of existing city staff and departments to develop and administer affordable housing programs and meet Comprehensive Plan objectives and determine if additional staff resources are needed.
- Work to identify or create a dedicated, annual source of funding to devote to the creation of affordable housing programs.
- Expand collaboration and programming with the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority.
- Consider strategies for replacing lost affordable housing options
- Develop programs to support maintenance of existing affordable housing options.
- Explore the utilization of publicly owned lands through Community Land Trusts to develop affordable housing.
- Continue to seek out public-private partnerships to develop affordable housing.
- Explore opportunities to expand housing options for residents with extremely low household incomes, e.g. less than 30% AMI.

SENIOR AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING NEEDS

- Expand permissions for Accessory Dwelling Units
- Encourage development of a variety of unit sizes and types to fill gaps in housing life cycle needs, including low-maintenance, single-level living options.
- Consider revising policy/standards to accommodate cottage communities and smaller detached homes.
- Require universal design features in new developments, especially affordable housing projects.

FAIRFAX AS A PLACE

- Adjust zoning in Activity Centers around high-density, mixed-use development.
- Identify Activity Center(s) with locations most likely to attract students and recent graduates and focus development around these target markets.
- Identify areas of the city for possible cottage communities both within and beyond Activity Center boundaries that are connected and accessible through trails, etc.

APPENDIX

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APPENDIX A: PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

FAIRFAX HOUSING SURVEY

The City of Fairfax, VA is conducting a Housing Needs Assessment with the goal of informing future policy and helping make decisions about new developments in the city, with specific focus on five designated Activity Centers.

The questions in this survey will help city leaders to collect public opinions about different kinds of development.

All information collected in this survey will be reported only in the aggregate and will be fully anonymized. No personal or other identifying information will be provided to city departments, leaders, or elected officials.

BEGIN

1. On which street in the City of Fairfax do you currently live:

2. In which subdivision, building, or complex do you currently live:

3. Which of the following best describes your age:

- 18-24 years
- 25-35 years
- 36-45 years
- 46-55 years
- 56-65 years
- 66-75 years
- Over 75 years

4. How long have you lived in the City of Fairfax?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

5. How many people children (under 18 years) currently live in your household?

6. How many non-senior adults (18-65 years) currently live in your household? (Please include yourself in the count, if applicable.)

7. How many senior adults (over 65 years) currently live in your household? (Please include yourself in the count, if applicable.)

8. Do you currently own or rent your home in the City of Fairfax?

- Own
- Rent
- Other _____

9. Which of the following best describes your current residence in the City of Fairfax?

- Multifamily (apartment or condominium)
- Townhome
- Duplex
- Detached home
- Other

10. If/when you move to your next home, which type of home would you prefer?

- Apartment
- Condominium
- Townhome
- Duplex
- Detached home
- I have no intention to move to another home
- Other: _____

11. Which of the following best describes your commute to work?

- Less than 10 minutes one way
- Between 10 and 30 minutes one way
- Between 30 and 60 minutes one way
- Over 60 minutes one way
- I work from home/remote exclusively
- I work hybrid-remote (split time between home and office/on-location)
- I am not currently working
- Other: _____

11a. In a typical week, how many days do you commute to your job?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- Other: _____

11b. On the days you commute to your job, how much time does it typically take (one way)?

- Less than 10 minutes one way
- Between 10 and 30 minutes one way
- Between 30 and 60 minutes one way
- Over 60 minutes one way
- Other: _____

12. If you were going to relocate to another home in the City of Fairfax, please rank each of the following factors based on its importance for you when considering a home.

- 1 – Unimportant
- 2 – Somewhat unimportant
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Somewhat important
- 5 – Very important

- Proximity to schools
- Proximity to parks/green space
- Proximity to shopping/groceries
- Proximity to restaurants/bars
- Home with a yard
- Home with limited yard/exterior maintenance
- Home is new, renovated, or otherwise “move-in ready”
- Neighborhood character/setting (e.g., home styles or exterior condition of homes)
- Access to sidewalks
- Off-the-street parking

13. Please indicate your level of support for each of the following items on a scale of 1 to 5:

- 1 – Oppose
- 2 – Somewhat oppose
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Somewhat support
- 5 – Strongly support

New housing development in the City of Fairfax should increase the number of _____.

- Housing options for low-income residents (less than \$1,700 per month in housing costs)
- Housing options for middle-income residents (\$1,700 - \$3,500 per month in housing costs)
- High-end housing options (\$3,500+ per month in housing costs)

14. Please indicate your level of support for each of the following items on a scale of 1 to 5:

- 1 – Oppose
- 2 – Somewhat oppose
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Somewhat support
- 5 – Strongly support

New housing development in the City of Fairfax should prioritize creating _____.

- Additional multifamily development (e.g., apartments and condominiums)
- Additional rental housing opportunities
- Additional mixed-use commercial/residential (multi-story) development in Activity Centers (e.g., Scout on the Circle)
- Additional townhomes
- Additional detached homes

15. Please indicate your level of support for each of the following items on a scale of 1 to 5:

- 1 – Oppose
- 2 – Somewhat oppose
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Somewhat support
- 5 – Strongly support

Future housing policy in the City of Fairfax should:

- Require usable green space as part of new developments
- Increase the opportunities for detached accessory dwelling units (e.g., adding an additional housing unit on the property of an existing house, such as in the back yard)
- Increase the opportunities for attached accessory dwelling units (e.g., adding a separate dwelling unit to an existing home)

- Expand opportunities to create duplexes in existing single-family neighborhoods
- Replace some existing commercial/retail lots with residential development

16. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

- Agree, Fairfax needs more
- Disagree, Fairfax does not need more
- Unsure/No Opinion

To meet the needs of its older adult residents, the City of Fairfax should increase the number of _____.

- Downsizing or “move down” housing options
- Independent/age-restricted housing options (e.g., 55+ community with access to onsite amenities and minimal care requirements)
- Assisted living housing options (e.g., assistance such as nursing care, housekeeping, and prepared meals provided onsite, as needed)
- Nursing homes/long-term care facilities (e.g., onsite medical and non-medical care for individuals unable to perform basic activities of daily living)
- Continuous care retirement communities (e.g., combined independent, assisted, and nursing on a single campus)
- Options for creating accessory dwelling units within existing homes (e.g., in-law suites”)
- Single-level living options (e.g., housing with bedrooms, kitchen, and bathrooms on the same level)
- Housing with universal design features for added accessibility (e.g., stepless entryways, wider doorframes, lever-style door handles, etc.)

17. In the space below, please provide any additional comments you have regarding housing in the City of Fairfax.

SUBMIT

Thank you for completing this survey!

The information collected from these questions will be presented in a Comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment Report that will be completed later this year.

APPENDIX B: COMPARABLE MARKETS AND TRENDS RESEARCH

	Population	Size (mi ²)	Median Household Income	Housing Units	Median Home Value
Fairfax, VA	23,980	6.27	\$118,492	9,294	\$596,800
Falls Church, VA	14,494	2.046	\$155,071	6,069	\$838,300
Davidson, NC	14,644	6.59	\$141,845	5,845	\$478,000
Decatur, GA	24,334	4.6	\$123,617	10,064	\$583,900

**All data from ACS 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates*

FALLS CHURCH, VA

The City of Falls Church is located roughly halfway between Fairfax and Washington, D.C. Although it is smaller than Fairfax, and is home to about 10,000 fewer residents, Falls Church has county-level governing status. It is also among the richest county/county equivalents in the country. Falls Church is only about one-quarter the size of Fairfax by area, but is home to roughly 2/3 the number of housing units.

	Population	Size (mi ²)	Median Household Income	Housing Units	Median Home Value
Fairfax, VA	23,980	6.27	\$118,492	9,294	\$596,800
Falls Church, VA	14,494	2.046	\$155,071	6,069	\$838,300

PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

Affordable Homeownership Program

The City of Falls Church Affordable Homeownership Program (AHP) is being financed by funding from Virginia Housing’s REACH (Resources Enabling Affordable Community Housing) program, as well as funds from the City of Falls Church and is managed by The NHP Foundation (NHPF) and the City of Falls Church’s Housing and Human Services Department (HHS).

NHPF will purchase and resell homes in the City of Falls Church at a reduced price to first-time homebuyers. Prices will be affordable to buyers at 50% to 120% of AMI. Homes can include single-family homes, townhomes, and condominiums. To participate in AHP, participants must meet certain eligibility and prioritization requirements.

Currently, the Affordable Homeownership Program has listed condominiums available for purchase starting at \$163,000, depending on household size, income levels, mortgage rates, and underwriting.

Affordable Dwelling Unit Program

The Affordable Dwelling Unit program offers homes throughout the city at a percentage of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Area Median Income (AMI). There are income limits on how much a household can make depending on the AMI percentage. While there is no minimum income, generally a resident should be paying 30% of their income in housing costs, as anything over that amount is considered to be housing cost burdened. Priority status is given based on the following:

- First priority: those 62 years of age or older who live in and work for/in the city; those with disabilities who live in and work for/in the city; as well as those who are homeless.
- Second priority: those who live in or work for/in the city.
- Third priority: those 62 years of age or older; those with disabilities who do not live in or work in the city; as well as all other applicants who do not live in or work in the city limits.

Affordable Housing Fund

The City of Falls Church Affordable Housing Fund (AHF) provides funding both to maintain existing affordable housing and to develop additional affordable housing opportunities for households with a gross income less than 120% of the area median income. Applications may be submitted at any time by nonprofit organizations, for-profit organizations, or the City of Falls Church general government.

Rental Assistance

The City of Falls Church provides grants (one time per year) for rent relief for residents who are 65 or older or persons with disabilities who meet the income and asset eligibility requirements, which include limits on gross household income (must be less than \$45,150) and asset value (must be less than \$150,000).

DEDICATED HOUSING STAFF AND RESOURCES

Housing and Human Services Department

In addition to a Planning Department, which employs eight planners and project managers, the City of Falls Church has a dedicated Housing and Human Services Administration is staffed by a director, a human services specialist, a housing development specialist, a housing specialist, and a management specialist.

DAVIDSON, NC

Located roughly 20 miles north of Charlotte, Davidson is home to Davidson College, a private liberal arts school enrolling roughly 2,000 students. The Town of Davidson has a population of just under 15,000 and covers roughly the same area as the City of Fairfax. While the median household income is higher than that of Fairfax, the median home value is lower.

	Population	Size (mi ²)	Median Household Income	Housing Units	Median Home Value
Fairfax, VA	23,980	6.27	\$118,492	9,294	\$596,800
Davidson, NC	14,644	6.59	\$141,845	5,845	\$478,000

PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

Affordable Housing Ordinance

The Town of Davidson requires that any new development with 2 or more residential units include affordable units in 12.5% of total unit count for the development. Half of these affordable units must be priced for those earning up to 80% of AMI and the other half must be priced for those making up to 120% of AMI. There is a Payment-In-Lieu (PIL) option for developers at the price of \$35,260 per unit. All PILs received are placed in an affordable housing trust fund.

Comprehensive Housing Affordability Program

Resulting from the 2022 Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, a pilot program is underway to “assist homeowners to remain in their affordable homes while allowing the town to preserve its affordable housing stock and some of our older neighborhoods.” Details of the program are under development.

Critical Home Repair Program

In collaboration with Habitat for Humanity, the Critical Home Repair Program (CHRP) is designed to address needs relating to unsafe roofing or flooring, lack of heat, electrical hazards, and plumbing hazards to help residents age in place.

Cottage Communities

In August 2022, the Town of Davidson and Mecklenburg County approved the construction of Davidson Cottages, a project with 30 single-family detached homes and two duplexes (34 total units) with publicly-accessible internal courtyards, a small gathering space, and a trail running throughout the property. These 34 units will be cottage-style homes and will sit on 3.135 acres. While these homes are larger than those in typical cottage communities, the proximity and shared spaces can serve as a functional model for these types of communities.

DEDICATED HOUSING STAFF AND RESOURCES

Housing and Equity Staff and Board

The Town of Davidson has a dedicated staff to manage affordable housing programs. This dedicated staff consists of at least two individuals, a Housing and Equity Director and a Housing Assistant.

Additionally, the town has an Affordable Housing and Equity Board, and a dedicated Affordable Housing Page on the town website with links to existing programs and information.

Davidson Housing Coalition

In 1996, the Town of Davidson voted to provide town support for staff and legal services for a non-profit corporation. The Town also provided \$5,000 for start-up costs and a \$250,000 revolving fund. The Davidson Housing Coalition (DHC) purchased four homes with this fund and has since repaid the city with interest for this investment. The next year, the DHC was incorporated with the North Carolina Secretary of State.

DHC offers programs for financial hardship, affordable rental properties, financial empowerment, homebuyer education, and critical home repair.

DECATUR, GA

Located roughly 7 miles from downtown Atlanta, Decatur sits just beyond the campus of Emory University, a private research institution that was annexed by Atlanta in 2017. Emory has a student enrollment of around 16,000. Although slightly smaller in area than the City of Fairfax, Decatur is similar to Fairfax in population, household income, housing unit count, and median home value.

	Population	Size (mi ²)	Median Household Income	Housing Units	Median Home Value
Fairfax, VA	23,980	6.27	\$118,492	9,294	\$596,800
Decatur, GA	24,334	4.6	\$123,617	10,064	\$583,900

PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

Mandatory Inclusionary Housing

Decatur's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing policy was adopted July 2020 and requires that any new development with five or more units set aside at least 10% of the units for moderate-income households. This policy represents a change from previous efforts to encourage dedicated affordable units through the use of density bonuses that alone had not done enough to address the shortage of affordable for-sale or for-rent housing options.

Commerce Drive Cottage Court

Developments of smaller homes clustered around shared green space offer home ownership options for first-time buyers and empty nesters interested in downsizing. The Decatur Development Authority is currently developing a model project with six homes ranging in size from 468 to 1,100 square feet that will be marketed to employees of the City of Decatur and City Schools of Decatur through a lottery system. Ownership of the land will be retained through a community land trust and the houses will be sold to individuals who qualify. Homeowners will have a 99-year lease on the land and share in the maintenance of common areas through a homeowners association. The city plans to pursue more of these developments and target individuals and families making 80-to-100 percent of the median income. The city is also making it easier for private builders to develop similar cottage court developments with multiple small homes rather than one or two large houses. These homes offer a much-needed small-home option.

Decatur Legacy Park

After the conclusion of the adopted Master Plan for Decatur Legacy Park (f.k.a. United Methodist Children's Home) on December 3, 2018, the City contracted additional planning services to further define affordable housing options. The scope of work was to review the specific housing locations, appropriate building types and scale in context to its surroundings both on-site and off-site, affordability preferences, parking needs, additional infrastructure to support the additional buildings, and the financial feasibility of different conceptual layouts, including potential subsidies that would be needed across the different scenarios. Engagement of the Housing Stakeholders group, a public community charrette, public input opportunity with the Winnona Park Neighborhood Association were also part of the scope. The Decatur Housing Authority will complete the housing at the South Housing Village at Legacy Park, resulting in 132 affordable units.

Accessory Dwelling Units

In 2014, the City revised its zoning codes to reduce the minimum square footage for a home and make it easier to build accessory dwellings in single-family residential districts. These smaller units, generally located to the rear of a primary residence, create small rental housing opportunities in single-family neighborhoods and provide additional income to help cover mortgage payments for the homeowner. They also offer a housing option for aging parents, young adult children or caregivers to support aging in place. ADUs are allowed in all single-family residential zoning districts if lot size and setback requirements are met. City staff will assist single-family homeowners interested in pursuing ADUs on their properties.

Decatur Land Trust

The Decatur Land Trust (DLT) was created in 2019 and incorporated in 2021 as an independent, non-profit corporation with 501(c)3 status. In 2020, the Affordable Housing Task Force recommended to build and fund the capacity of the DLT to purchase property. The mission is to acquire and create homes, land, and commercial properties for community benefit and permanent affordability, and to encourage home ownership by stewarding new homeowners and minimizing displacement. Two DLT projects are now active and accepting applications: Oak Cottage Court and Park 108 Residences.

Decatur Home ReHAB Program

Decatur Home ReHAB program seeks to retain Decatur's legacy residents and preserve smaller, older homes by addressing deferred home maintenance that many current residents are not able to afford. The Decatur Home Rehabilitation Program will focus primarily on legacy residents on fixed incomes, as well as low-income homeowners. Repairs and rehabilitation will assist these homeowners in maintaining safe, accessible homes using public subsidy and grant funding, donations, and low interest loans to hire local skilled technicians to make needed repairs.

Homestead Exemptions for Homeowners and Property Tax Assistance Programs

The basic homestead exemption reduces the property tax bill for owner-occupied housing. Additional homestead exemptions target lower-income homeowners and older homeowners to further reduce property tax bills to help make homeownership more affordable. Decatur residents voted to approve five homestead exemptions that extended existing programs and added an additional program.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend of Service for senior home repair

This community-supported program works with lower-income senior homeowners in Decatur to provide much-needed home repairs and energy-efficient upgrades, making it possible for them to age in place and remain in the community. Work ranges from simple repairs to projects that correct hazardous conditions and make a home more accessible for elderly residents. While the majority of this work is done during the month of January in honor of Dr. King's birthday, assistance is provided throughout the year to address emergency repairs.

DEDICATED HOUSING STAFF AND RESOURCES

Staff Resources

The City of Decatur employs the following positions relating the planning and zoning:

- Planning and Economic Development Director
- Planning, Zoning & Historical Districts Staff Member
- Permit Technician

- Equity & Engagement Director
- City Planner
- Lifelong Community Manager

Affordable Housing Task Force and Missing Middle Commission

In 2019, Decatur’s City Commission created an Affordable Housing Task Force to research and develop recommendations for new policies, programs, and initiatives for the creation and preservation of new and existing workforce and affordable housing. There is also a dedicated Missing Middle Commission that is “looking to re-allow the compatibly-sized duplexes, triplexes, and quads” (often referred to collectively as “missing middle housing”) that were once so common within our neighborhoods.”

Decatur Housing Summit

The City of Decatur invited the broader community to contribute to a conversation on inclusive and affordable housing in November of 2018. The day-long Summit helped attendees establish a shared understanding of Decatur’s housing context, define the often-subjective term affordability as it relates to Decatur, explore viable approaches and strategies, and conclude with ways for all participants to be a part of local solutions. The summary report can be found here: <https://www.decaturnext.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Housing-Summit-Report.pdf>

APPENDIX C: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

In an effort to better understand attitudes held across stakeholder groups regarding housing in Fairfax, multiple stakeholder engagement strategies were deployed. The project team conducted several one-on-one and small focus groups, held two public engagement sessions, and distributed a survey to all addresses within the city. While attitudes varied across engagement types, consistent themes emerged.

INTERVIEWS

The project team conducted a series of interviews and small focus groups with stakeholders representing various perspectives on housing in the City of Fairfax. An effort was made to connect with stakeholders representing a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and areas of expertise. Interview topics included personal priorities for housing in the City of Fairfax, observed trends both region-wide and city-wide, anticipated barriers to various types of housing development, and more.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Interview participants were initially selected on the recommendation of city officials, and additional participants were identified as the project team gathered additional information relevant to the project goals. Interview & focus group participants included:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| ▪ Anna Shapiro | ▪ Matt Rice | ▪ Kimberly Avila |
| ▪ Akash Thakkar | ▪ Brooke Hardin | ▪ Jeannie Cummins |
| ▪ Jennifer Rose | ▪ Rob Stalzer | ▪ Donna Budway |

- Kirsten Lockhart
- Lisa Whetzel
- Mark Angres
- Paul Cunningham
- Tara Ruszkowski
- Abby Dunner
- Lucy Beadnell
- Jon Avila
- Clayton Austin
- Jim Feather
- Russ Rosenberger
- Dave Sittler

INTERVIEW THEMES

General support for increasing density

Interview participants tended to support increased housing density in the City of Fairfax, and frequently discussed the (larger-by comparison) share of the city's land devoted to single family detached housing. Many participants shared the belief that, while it is unlikely and unadvisable that existing single family detached development will be rezoned to include multifamily, existing activity zones, excessive parking areas, and unused office space should be developed to facilitate greater density in the City of Fairfax.

Increasing demand for walkability & public spaces

Discussions around increased density often resulted in participants emphasizing the importance of improved walkability and vibrant public spaces. Participants across stakeholder groups tended to believe that those living in multi-unit buildings would be attracted to walkability and ease of access to amenities. This was sometimes discussed as a tradeoff for smaller living quarters or a priority that accompanies the stage of life associated with apartment living (young professionals).

Walkability was also framed as an important consideration for families who may wish to raise children in an increasingly dense community, and for those with disabilities needing to reach destinations safely and independently. Participants impressed that these groups must be able to navigate the City of Fairfax without a heightened risk of traffic-related accidents.

Support & apprehension around mixed-use development

Participant input around mixed-use development was generally supportive although somewhat mixed regarding demand and viability. Both pros and cons were outlined for the benefits that mixed-use development can have for residents with disabilities. On one hand, having residential and retail in one place can be a benefit for those without access to reliable transportation. On the other hand, some safety concerns were raised with the higher traffic density that can occur in these spaces. Overall, most participants felt that mixed use developments are a promising tool to develop vibrant communities, but apprehension existed surrounding the viability of additional commercial space as part of mixed-use developments. Some worried that because commercial and retail space is shrinking as more aspects of daily life are digitized, it will be difficult to identify long-term commercial tenants.

Concerns around diminishing affordability

Participants were eager to discuss the landscape around affordability that many interpret to be reaching a critical point region-wide. Despite recent efforts to increase density, participants tended to feel that housing costs exceed what some critical segments of the workforce can afford. Some participants discussed the ethics of inclusivity in their narrative around the importance of preserving affordability, while others discussed the economic impact that may occur if local services, education, and retail employees are priced out of the community.

Many participants supported, were familiar with, or helped to develop the City's Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance but recognized that the ordinance's provisions would not replace recently lost units available to those at lower incomes at a 1:1 rate. Some participants believed that preserving affordable housing would

require significant investment from the city, and some discussed a potential need to develop messaging around affordable housing in order to promote the importance of housing options for a range of incomes to the general public.

Efforts to improve housing accessibility

The project team spoke with five members of the community about the housing landscape specifically as it relates to those with disabilities and/or senior residents. Participants impressed the importance of options for residents with disabilities, saying that, while there is variety in housing and support needs for those with disabilities, one of the most important considerations is ensuring that those with disabilities can live in the same communities and housing developments as those without disabilities. Participants relayed that this may require ensuring that developers and property managers understand needs related to support staff, accessible units, and live in aides.

Participants identified access to community as being especially important for those with disabilities, some of whom may feel isolated in many parts of life. Community space, walkability, and access to events were all discussed as priorities for those with disabilities when considering housing.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

TPMA and City of Fairfax staff hosted two public engagement sessions in November 2022. Sessions were held to capture local perspectives regarding types of housing development that are prioritized by stakeholders. During the sessions, project team members shared background on the trends that preceded the commission of a housing study, local housing data, and findings to date. Participants then engaged in small group discussion with the opportunity to share key points with the larger group, finishing the session with facilitated discussion amongst all participants.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SESSION THEMES

Concerns around diminishing affordability

Like in 1-on-1 interviews, participants discussed concerns around rising housing costs and a decrease in affordable housing in the area. Participants shared that children and loved ones were unable to afford to live in the city, and that they wanted their community to be accessible to a broader range of income levels. Some participants described their desire for service workers and other specific professions to afford to live in the city and associated a range of income levels with a desirable diversity or vibrancy.

City has a strong sense of place

Participants tended to report that they value the way the city's design, history, and culture makes them feel, often using the phrases "small town feel," and "small town charm." These phrases likely reference the types or architecture and materials used throughout the city, as well as the city's historic and walkable downtown. These features were discussed as key reasons why participants loved living in Fairfax and elements of the city that participants hope to maintain despite a growing population and increasing density.

Apprehension around increasing density

While affordability was discussed as a priority for many stakeholders, engagement session participants were less likely to vocalize support for increased housing density. Some discussed a perceived increase in traffic, some felt that high-density housing developments were visually unappealing, and some worried about the effect of a growing population on the local school district and public services. Although increased

density is often associated with improved affordability, some participants were hesitant to embrace the shifting aesthetics of the city and region. Participants also expressed a concern that increased density might lead to increased traffic in the city.

Apprehension around shifting demographics

Engagement session participants shared some apprehension about the increasing prevalence of non-traditional household types in the city. Privately-owned student housing was discussed, as well as observed instances of low-income families “doubling up” in units they would otherwise be unable to afford.