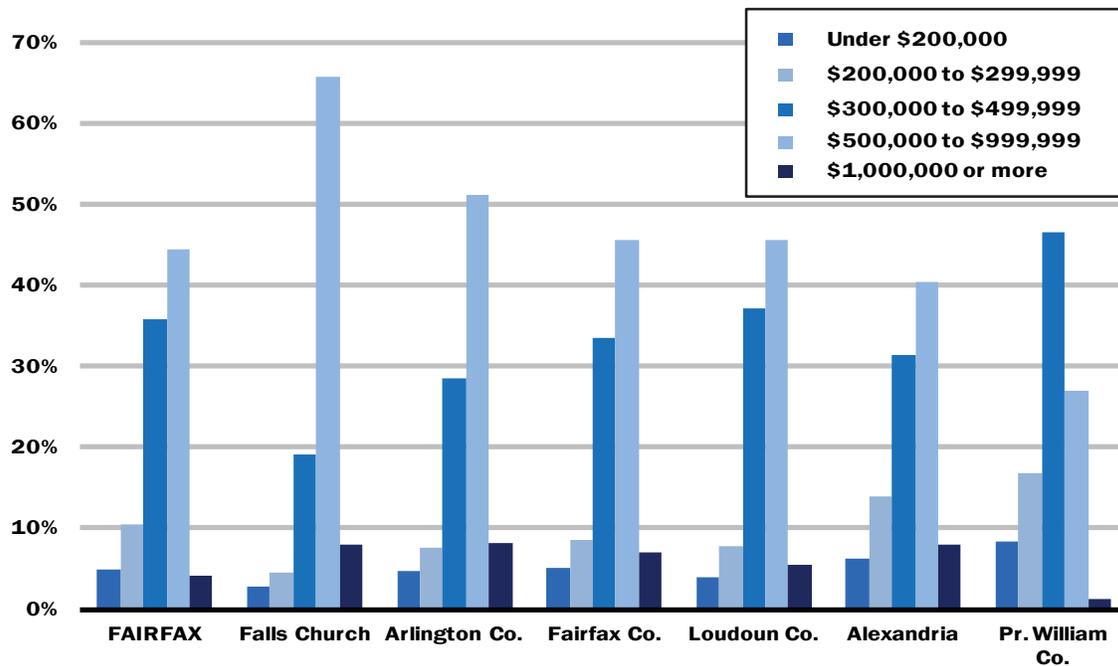


Figure HOU-3  
**Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units, 2010**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure HOU-4 examines data from the real estate industry on the prices of housing sales for detached, attached, and condominium units. Generally, the inner jurisdictions commanded higher average prices for all types of units, while outer jurisdictions offered more affordable housing. Fairfax, in the middle both geographically and economically, offers housing that is considered relatively affordable by regional standards. In 2010, the average detached housing unit sold in Fairfax was \$489,000 – a figure that is 7 percent lower than the regional average for all of Northern Virginia. Townhouses in Fairfax tend to average higher sale prices than nationwide norms due to the larger mix of newer townhouses offered in the City as compared to many other jurisdictions. For example, in 2010, the average sale price of an attached house (townhouses and duplexes) in the City was \$454,000 – a full 39 percent more than the regional average of \$327,000. Conversely, Fairfax condominiums tend to have lower sale prices than the regional averages, with the City’s \$173,000 average sale price being 67 percent of the regional average of \$258,000.

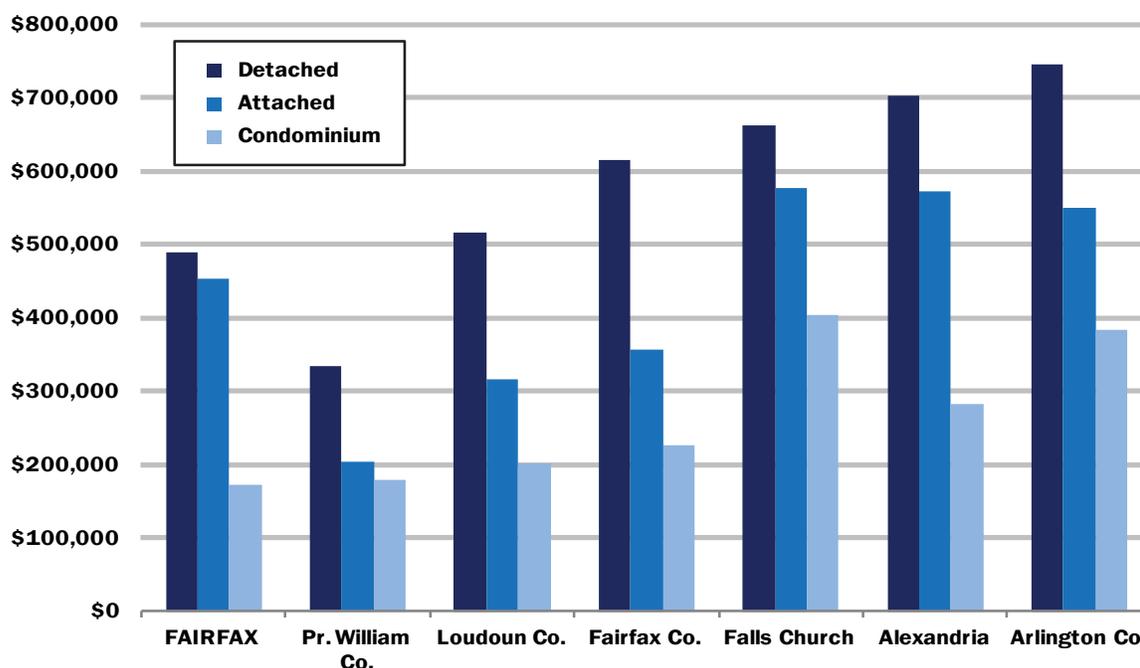
For quite some time, analyses of the City’s housing stock relative to regional income have indicated that the most deficient component of the City’s housing stock is “move-up” housing – housing that would be appropriate for current City homeowners as they reach their peak earning years. While the need for such housing has partially been

satisfied by recently built developments such as Farrcroft, Pickett’s Reserve and others, the need for move-up housing is still a priority for the City and an aim to providing a more balanced set of housing options.

In addition, changing market forces have exacerbated a need at the other end of the housing spectrum – for housing that is affordable to those earning less than the region’s median income. Much of the City’s stock of for-sale housing that was once considered affordable has become less affordable in recent years. This is a result of City properties following a regional trend of price escalation that has significantly outpaced wage growth. Additionally, almost all new housing construction within the past three decades has added stock to the upper housing price ranges, altering the balance of housing units at various price points.

While changes to the City’s housing composition in recent decades has been largely limited to for-sale housing, that is changing as new rental apartment complexes are built, and existing rental complexes (which currently contain a high share of the City’s affordable housing stock) are upgraded or redeveloped. A significant decline in the proportion of economical housing options would have a negative effect on Fairfax’s residents and quality of life. As a result, the provision and maintenance of affordable housing is a priority for the City.

Figure HOU-4  
Average Sale Price of Housing Units by Type, 2010



Source: Real Estate Business Intelligence.

## Housing Assistance and Home Improvement Programs

By cooperative agreement with the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, the City participates in several federal, state and local housing assistance programs.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (previously known as Section 8), funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, offers rental housing subsidies to low-income citizens, as well as the elderly and disabled. The Voucher Housing waiting list is maintained and administered by the Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development for the City. While income restrictions for housing vouchers vary based on household size, three-quarters of new program recipients must earn less than 30 percent of the region's median household income (for 2011, the 30 percent threshold was \$22,500 for an individual and \$31,850 for a family of four).

The Home Repair for the Elderly Program, financed through a combination of Community Development Block Grant funds and state weatherization funds (in addition to leveraged private funding), provides free minor repairs such

as accessibility improvements, painting, plumbing, electrical and guttering work for either elderly or disabled residents. Funded work may involve a maximum expenditure of \$500 in materials per household. Up to a week's worth of labor is provided in addition to the materials cost to effect repairs. Approximately two to four eligible households in the City receive assistance every year.

The City's own tax and rent relief programs, administered through the Finance Department, are available to City residents who meet income requirements and are over 65 years of age or are disabled. The programs provide partial and full tax exemptions for homeowners who qualify, as well as renter grants for qualifying residents who do not own their own homes. Approximately 250 homeowners and ten renters utilize the programs annually.

The predominance of mature neighborhoods in the City implies the potential for structural and functional obsolescence and increased maintenance and rehabilitation requirements. As a result, programs such as Tax Relief and Home Repair for the Elderly are significant to the maintenance of healthy and attractive neighborhoods.

The City's Human Services Offices serves as the first point of contact for City residents to access the Home Repair for the Elderly Program, and the office's Coordinator also monitors the Housing Choice Vouchers waiting list. Requests

for emergency shelter are also received by the City's Human Services Coordinator and provided by contact with Fairfax County.

### ***Neighborhood Renaissance***

The Neighborhood Renaissance program is a public-private effort to encourage and support the improvement of residential property throughout the City. Financing for home improvements is available through a partnership with the local lending community, with simplified application procedures, and favorable interest rates and fees. Administration, marketing and coordination of the program are performed by the City's Department of Community Development and Planning.

In 1991 and 2002, the City made several changes to its residential zoning regulations to introduce flexibility into the development process for upgrading single-family homes. These changes included relaxation of setback requirements and creation of a special exception mechanism for permitting minor deviations from the standard regulations to accommodate quality improvements and administrative approvals of limited deviations from certain standards.

State enabling legislation passed in 1996 facilitates local adoption of active spot blight abatement programs. The City is actively using the provisions of the spot blight program to require improvements and maintenance of older structures. This program is useful in improving the appearance and stability of the City's older neighborhoods and business districts.

In addition to the Neighborhood Renaissance low-interest loan program mentioned above, owners of homes that are over 15 years old and who undertake improvements that increase the assessed value of their homes by more than 15 percent may be eligible, through the City's Real Estate Tax Exemption Program, to exempt the full value of the difference in taxes between the new value and the previous value for five years with diminishing exemptions through years six through ten.

The Neighborhood Renaissance program and residential tax incentives have spurred residential upgrades in the City. Since 2002, Neighborhood Renaissance received 318 projects applications, of which 180 received loans.

## **Senior Housing and Care**

Three senior care facilities – offering short-term, long-term and rehabilitative care – currently exist within the City. Two of these are nursing homes: the 250-bed Fairfax Nursing Center on Main Street and the 143-bed Commonwealth Health & Rehab Center on Chain Bridge Road. There is, however, a strong likelihood that the Health & Rehab Center may relocate out of the City by 2015. The facility was purchased by a healthcare company that announced plans to build a new facility in Oakton, and as of late 2011, plans were to keep the current facility open only until the new facility is operational. The Chain Bridge Road facility expanded in 1995 to include a center for assisted living, now called Sunrise of George Mason, located on George Mason Boulevard. The facility houses 70 persons in single and double suites, and provides daily assistance for seniors who require medical care.

The Human Services Office maintains a list of additional senior housing opportunities in Northern Virginia. Nearest to the City are Little River Glen, a Fairfax County elderly rental community located at the City's southeastern boundary, as well as private care retirement communities The Virginian and Sunrise to the northeast and The Woodlands and Gardens to the west.

The number of City of residents over 65 years of age has nearly tripled since 1980. According to the 2010 Census, about 25 percent of City households contain at least one person over the age of 65, and among those households, approximately one-third of them consist of an individual living alone.

A full range of options for senior citizens is necessary, including assisted living, independent living and nursing care facilities. In addition to housing units designed for care-dependent residents, the provision of housing for independent, mobile senior citizens is also important. Provisions for easing the process of residents "aging in place" – living independently in their existing homes – would greatly benefit the City's livability. Actions such as encouraging the provision of universal design elements in new construction, or assisting homeowners in retrofitting homes with accessible features should be explored as ways to help achieve this goal.

Furthermore, consideration should be given to promoting housing units that may be appropriate for aging in place. Generally, townhouses are not easily accessible for the elderly. Patio homes and two-story homes with first-floor bedrooms, as well as one-story condominiums in multistory buildings, should be considered appropriate for future

senior housing. Additionally, City legislative efforts have enabled the building of accessory units for senior citizen use, using family member restrictions to prevent the units from becoming rental properties.

Additional housing options designed for senior citizens would be warranted in Fairfax. Among the locations that may be suitable for new senior housing is the current Commonwealth Health & Rehab Center property, should that site become available for development due to the Rehab Center's planned departure.

## Community Pride and Involvement

The main form of organization of the City's neighborhoods is through the City's numerous civic and homeowners associations. These associations are generally organized around a residential area that was either created by the division of a single piece of land or conceived and built as a single development. The types of communities the civic associations represent range from subdivisions composed entirely of single-family lots to townhouse developments and condominium complexes. Currently the City has 49 civic associations or homeowners' associations in existence, although their duties and capabilities vary.

While the City's civic and homeowners' associations as a group provide a good vehicle for organizing residents' viewpoints for presentation to City officials, not every association is fully active. Although most newer communities have homeowners' associations, where membership is mandatory, most older neighborhoods in the City have voluntary civic associations. Civic associations depend on dedicated resident volunteers to keep them active, and if that interest trails off, the association may become inactive. Issues that can hinder the effectiveness of some civic associations in organizing City residents include absentee or non-resident owners of rental units, transient tenant populations such as students, and non-representative leadership. To encourage active participation of civic and homeowners' associations, the City offers low-cost but effective support, such as complimentary usage of city meeting space, access to photocopying for announcements and newsletters, and coordination with Citywide neighborhood events such as Spring Cleanup Month. Efforts such as these should continue as cost-effective methods to promote community pride and involvement through established neighborhood organizations.

Beyond neighborhood organizations, the City maintains more than a dozen boards and commissions to which

residents are appointed. These boards and commissions examine a myriad of topics related to City operations and future goals, yielding a highly effective way for residents to become involved in matters that interest and affect their neighborhoods.

Between neighborhood organizations and boards and commissions, the City deeply values community participation and should support efforts to maintain active participation in the future.

## Housing Trends

Future development patterns in the City will be defined by the location and character of vacant residential land and potential redevelopment areas, economic conditions, and zoning and subdivision regulations, as well as by redevelopment opportunities and incentives. Little vacant land remains in the City in areas identified as residential on the Future Land Use Map. Because much of the City's housing stock is aging, the potential for rehabilitation or redevelopment exists concurrently with infill development opportunities citywide. Approximately 25 vacant, residentially zoned and subdivided lots (excluding unbuildable outlots) are scattered throughout the City, evenly distributed between the City's four quadrants.

Between 2003 and 2010, approximately 200 homes were built in Fairfax, all but 26 of them being single-family detached homes (those being ten townhouses in the Fairfax Gateway development as well as the first phases of the Main Street Residences and Madison Mews developments). With the exception of Pickett's Reserve, all of the recent detached residential construction has been in either smaller developments (of under ten units) or scattered infill construction.

Upcoming subdivisions include the completion of the Main Street Residences/Cameron Glen and Madison Mews townhouse subdivisions as well as three additional townhouse developments bordering Chain Bridge Road near the City's southern limits.

The recent wave of housing construction activity has done much to reposition the City's housing market within the larger regional context. With an emphasis on higher-end single-family detached and townhouse units, the City's housing stock has come closer to matching the high-income profile of the region's residents. Additionally, the infusion of newer units has greatly worked towards the goal of updating the City's housing stock. These new units, combined with a strong push to modernize existing residences, should allow the City to remain competitive in the regional housing market.

**HOU-1.3 Monitor the adequacy of subsidized housing units in the City and seek access to additional affordable housing opportunities.**

One privately-owned, HUD Section 236-financed apartment complex, West Wood Oaks, is located in the City. The City should continue to monitor the status of these existing subsidized housing units as well as other affordable housing programs and opportunities now available to City residents by contract with the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

**HOU-1.4 Encourage the provision of affordable housing units in the development approval process for new residential construction.**

When the City considers land use actions for significant new residential development, provisions shall be made for affordable housing, with a priority on the provision of affordable housing units. These units should, to the maximum extent possible, include appropriate floor plans for a variety of household types, including families, seniors, and individuals living alone. The provision of new dedicated affordable units contained within the proposed development shall be an important consideration in evaluating the merits of the greater proposal.

**HOU-1.5 Articulate a Housing Affordability Strategy.**

Recognizing that every person has the right to decent, safe, and sanitary housing, the City recognizes the need for community-wide housing affordability. This issue needs to be comprehensively examined to determine what the City can best, and most effectively, do in order to increase housing opportunities for residents of all income levels. Given the size and nature of the City, it is in its best interest to provide for flexibility in the options it has to preserve and increase affordable housing options. In addition to prioritizing affordable units in new construction as described in Strategy HOU-1.4, the City may consider the applicability of other options to promote housing affordability, including the provision of affordable units for new for-sale developments, the establishment of a housing trust fund, a plan for the preservation of existing affordable housing units, and other options that could promote housing affordability for a large range of residents.

**HOU-1.6 Seek and publicize opportunities for the City's renters to become homeowners.**

The City should work with regional consortia and federal, state and local governments and private organizations to identify and make available technical and funding assistance for homeownership.

**HOU-1.7 Encourage the implementation of universal design components into new construction in order to avoid the need for costly retrofitting to be undertaken by elderly and disabled residents.**

Industry studies have shown that residences that have been built with universal design elements initially included are much less costly to adapt for disabled occupants than are housing units not incorporating universal design. The provision of universal design components in initial construction of a residence should greatly reduce retrofitting costs allowing homes to remain habitable for aging residents or residents who may become disabled.

*Objective HOU-2 Preserve and enhance the City's existing housing stock. Analyze the City's residential neighborhood patterns and ensure that traditional neighborhood characteristics are respected as these neighborhoods undergo change.*

**Strategies****HOU-2.1 Monitor the overall stability of neighborhoods on a periodic basis.**

Much of the City's housing stock is more than 40 years old, which increases its susceptibility to deterioration. The City should periodically survey housing conditions to keep abreast of subtle changes in residential areas that, unchecked, could lead to the gradual deterioration of neighborhoods. In addition, the City should seek additional federal funding for City residents to access these programs.



Westmore



Mosby Woods

### **HOU-2.2 Identify areas that would benefit from rehabilitation assistance or conservation measures.**

Using neighborhood stability indicators, the City should identify neighborhoods that would receive the greatest benefit from neighborhood improvements and housing rehabilitation assistance. In addition to local regulatory enforcement and incentive programs, the City should identify and seek federal and state funding sources to address the problem of neighborhood deterioration in identified target areas.

### **HOU-2.3 Actively promote existing housing preservation programs, particularly in neighborhoods identified for improvements.**

The City should actively promote these programs to encourage greater participation, which will ultimately result in the preservation of housing units and contribute to the stabilization of neighborhoods. In addition, the City should seek additional federal funding for City residents to access these programs.

### **HOU-2.4 Aggressively pursue activities that will result in the improvement of the City's neighborhoods.**

The City should assert leadership in a continuous effort to improve the existing housing stock. Because many of the City's neighborhoods were developed in the 1950s and 1960s, they have aged to the point where positive action is necessary to ensure that they remain appealing places to live. It is because of these factors that the previously-described Neighborhood Renaissance program was established. The Neighborhood Renaissance program is available to residential property owners in the City to facilitate upgrading older homes. This is accomplished by assisting homeowners in locating favorable financing, locating contractors, taking advantage of real estate tax incentives and acquiring information. The Neighborhood Renaissance program is a substantial part of what should be a larger effort to improve City neighborhoods. While the focus

of Neighborhood Renaissance is primarily assistance to individual homeowners, this larger effort should focus more on the neighborhoods. The following should be considered in the implementation of this effort:

- Working with professional designers to develop prototype renovations of existing "typical" houses within neighborhoods.
- Working with representatives from the construction, development and remodeling industries to ascertain the feasibility and desirability of redevelopment and remodeling at a large scale.
- Working with the mortgage lending community to develop aggressive strategies to leverage private investment in neighborhoods.
- Ascertaining the extent to which direct City investment in neighborhoods is practical and desirable.
- Developing an extension of the City's website to provide the public with up-to-date information on the Neighborhood Renaissance program and a listing of public and private resources available to homeowners.
- Examining the zoning regulations to ensure that appropriate improvements in residential districts are not unnecessarily restricted.

In addition to the City-sponsored activities described above, Fairfax County administers two federally assisted housing programs in which the City participates. While it is desirable to continue this arrangement, the City should take a more active role in the management and utilization of these programs. Further, the City should keep abreast of new programs and changes in the existing programs to ensure the appropriate degree of participation.

**HOU-2.5 Prepare plans and development guidelines specific to each neighborhood in the City.**

In addition to the citywide Community Appearance Plan, individual Neighborhood Plans should be prepared to outline existing development patterns and to offer guidelines for future infill, redevelopment, maintenance and enhancement.

*Objective HOU-3 Promote affirmative maintenance initiatives throughout the City's residential neighborhoods and adopt residential community appearance guidelines.*

**Strategies****HOU-3.1 Review the housing-related sections of the City Code, as well as other City policy addressing housing and neighborhoods, to ensure that they adequately address contemporary issues and offer the appropriate degree of protection for occupants and neighbors.**

Economic and demographic conditions within the City have resulted in some challenging conditions that affect the appearance and serenity of some of the City's neighborhoods. These conditions include overcrowding of houses, excessive number of vehicles, parking on lawns, lack of home maintenance, and noise. The City should continue to review and amend, as appropriate, its policies and regulations that address these neighborhood quality-of-life issues. Also, preparation and adoption of residential appearance standards would assist in this effort (see HOU-3.2).

**HOU-3.2 Adopt community appearance guidelines for residential neighborhoods.**

The Community Appearance Plan (CAP) should be expanded to provide guidelines for property maintenance and enhancement in residential neighborhoods. As a policy document, the CAP should highlight the responsibility of the individual property owner to take pride in home ownership and contribute to the overall appearance of the neighborhood.

**HOU-3.3 Publicize affirmative maintenance initiatives and solicit active citizen participation.**

The cooperation and participation of homeowners, residents and civic and community associations, as well as the continued enforcement of the City Code and continued publicity campaigns such as the Neighborhood Renaissance program will help promote affirmative maintenance initiatives.

*Objective HOU-4 Encourage the development of housing on appropriate remaining vacant property and promote upgrading of existing residential development.*

**Strategies****HOU-4.1 Ensure that the City's land use and zoning mechanisms continue to reflect the importance of residential land use in the City.**

Where appropriate, remaining vacant property in the City should be developed residentially. As development and redevelopment occurs throughout the City, residential land uses of higher densities should be considered where graduated transitions between existing single-family detached neighborhoods and more intensive land uses on arterial streets may be created. Where that is not feasible, development should incorporate the necessary design features to ensure compatibility with nearby residential uses.

**HOU-4.2 Provide for innovative design to make new residential development feasible.**

Due to a combination of several factors, it is not feasible to develop certain sites in the City as conventional residential subdivisions. Included among those factors are: high land costs, small size of many of the remaining vacant sites (including infill sites) and natural site constraints such as the presence of floodplain and steep slopes. Appropriate development on these parcels must achieve the proper balance between density and design to ensure compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods.

**HOU-4.3 Comprehensively examine and amend the residential sections of the zoning text in the City Code and amend the zoning map, as necessary, to facilitate upgrading of existing residential properties, more accurately reflect practical constraints of existing residential development, and to accommodate minor alterations to individual homes in planned developments.**

Because so much of the City's residential development predates the current zoning regulations, there are many instances in which siting constraints – including overall lot size and shape, as well as required front, side and rear yard setbacks – make impractical or difficult the upgrading of residential properties. Although the zoning text has been amended in the past to address some of these difficulties, it remains unable to adequately support many appropriate residential improvement efforts. In addition, recent residential construction,

much of which is located in planned developments with proffered development plans, severely constrains future actions of individual homeowners to make minor alterations to their homes and properties.

A comprehensive revision of the residential sections of the zoning text is necessary to make it more flexible, practical and responsive to contemporary residential development.

*Objective HOU-5 Encourage regional cooperation to manage the existing and anticipated housing needs generated by George Mason University, and monitor problems associated with student rental housing.*

### Strategies

**HOU-5.1 Continue to collaborate on finding solutions to George Mason University’s student housing problems including potential shortages, overcrowding, excessive parking demand, traffic and noise in residential neighborhoods.**

An open exchange of ideas and concerns about student housing issues should occur. The City recognizes the need for additional student housing and encourages the University to add student residences to campus, as a more residential campus would benefit both the University and the City. Further, the City should assist in identifying and addressing student housing problems and possible solutions, with an emphasis placed on providing adequate on-campus housing.

**HOU-5.2 Examine experiences of other areas similarly confronted with the issues associated with a large, expanding university.**

The City should seek out other localities with similar problems, examine those localities’ responses to the problems and determine whether such solutions would be applicable in the City of Fairfax.

*Objective HOU-6 Encourage the establishment of additional limited residential uses in and near Old Town Fairfax.*

### Strategies

**HOU-6.1 Promote appropriate residential uses in and near Old Town Fairfax.**

The establishment of additional residential uses in and near Old Town Fairfax is essential to transform that

area from a daytime business center into a more thriving, vital part of the community. Although this Plan generally encourages the development of residential uses within Old Town, it is essential that the design and construction of these residential developments is of such quality as to integrate into the fabric of Old Town. In addition, given the limited size of Old Town Fairfax, it is also essential that the number of residential projects is controlled so that efforts to develop a critical retail mass in this area are not compromised.

**HOU-6.2 Encourage property owners to develop ancillary residential uses in the Old Town Fairfax Historic District.**

The majority of land in Old Town Fairfax is zoned for commercial uses, and while certain residential uses are permitted, to date few have been built in conjunction with commercial projects. Part of the problem is the added cost of construction incurred when mixing residential and commercial uses in the same building.

*Objective HOU-7 Analyze the City’s residential neighborhood patterns, making any changes in zoning or comprehensive plan designations that will better allow the City’s traditional neighborhood characteristics to persevere through redevelopment.*

### Strategy

**HOU-7.1 Ensure that the current neighborhood classifications in the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance are suitable for allowing neighborhoods to revitalize while maintaining their essential characteristics.**

This entails a balancing act between attempting to spur renovation or replacement of the City’s dated residential structures and trying to preserve the desirable characteristics that make many residents enjoy their neighborhoods.

Similarly, this analysis would also be conducted with the aim of preserving the City’s existing single-family neighborhoods from becoming more dense due to subdivisions or infill based on zoning and comprehensive plan classifications. An example of action taken on this item is the creation of the “very low density residential” classification on the Future Land Use map – intended to protect some of these neighborhoods from undergoing long-term transformations to higher density levels.