







Coalition for Housing Opportunities In the Community for Everyone, Inc.





## **A CRITICAL NEED FOR AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE HOUSING IN FAIRFAX COUNTY**

Fairfax County's economic and population growth has fueled massive housing construction, but the beneficiaries of this effort have primarily been those with six digit incomes. Fairfax County's 54,000+ citizens with physical and sensory disabilities are among the hardest hit in this housing market, because they face several unique barriers to getting a place of their own: low incomes; high housing costs, and a dearth of accessible housing.




### **Income barriers**

-  While 81.2% of people without disabilities in the Fairfax area are employed, only 54.5% of people ages 21-64 with physical disabilities and 67.8% of those with sensory disabilities have jobs.
-  The 2000 median household income of Fairfax and Falls Church households that have a person with a disability was \$63,000, compared to \$84,000 for households that do not have a person with a disability.
-  The percentage of people with disabilities below the poverty level is almost twice that of people without disabilities in the Fairfax area.
-  Approximately 1,950 households with a family member who has a disability are on the waiting list for public housing or housing choice vouchers.

### **High housing costs, limited availability of housing:**

-  The average monthly rent in Fairfax County was \$1,202 in January 2005.
-  In order to afford this monthly rent, a household must earn at least \$23.14 per hour, or \$48,080.00 per year. This calculation assumes no more than 30% of income is spent on rent. An individual earning minimum wage in this state (\$5.15) will have to work 180 hours per week to have an income high enough to afford this rent.
-  Based on the 2005 average home sale price, a monthly net income of \$11,917 (or \$143,000/year) is needed to afford a mortgage payment of \$3,575/month at a 7% fixed interest rate for 30 years.
-  The number of households in the region grew by 27.7% between 1990 and 2000, while the number of housing units increased only 23.9%. Most growth occurred in outlying areas such as Loudoun County, which has limited public transportation: a critical resource for people with disabilities.

### **Lack of accessible units:**

-  A 2001 Fairfax County Disability Service Planning and Development Department study shows Fairfax County had 57,236 market rental units, 2318 or 4% of which had accessible features. Approximately 67% of Fairfax County citizens with disabilities rent their housing, while only 25% of citizens without disabilities are renters. Since these units are available to the general public, they are often occupied by individuals who do not require the accessible features. Based on the income disparities between people with and without disabilities shown above, people with disabilities are at a major competitive disadvantage for all rental units, including accessible rental units.
-  In 2001, the County had 6,271 low-income, subsidized units, of which 2,439 or 49% were accessible. However, 1,103 of these units were designated as elderly-only units. This pits non-elderly people with disabilities against senior citizens in a race for accessible housing.
-  The Fairfax Disability Services Board's October 2005 publication, "Rental Complexes with Units with Accessible Features" lists accessible units across the Counties of Arlington and Fairfax, and the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church. The degree of accessibility varies from property to property. Three complexes did not specify the number of accessible units on site. If 100% of the units in these three complexes were accessible, there would approximately 13,600 accessible units on the market. Assuming about 36,000 (67%) of Fairfax County residents with physical and sensory disabilities rent housing, the current accessible housing stock does not come close to meeting the need.