

TALKING POINTS

TO RESTORE RESOURCES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing provides stability for families, supports an economically diverse workforce and sustains vibrant communities.

Providing housing opportunities for families and our workforce is as important as providing a quality educational system for our children, safe, secure communities and an efficient, reliable transportation network.

Housing is not just about production and preservation of units, **it's about the unmet needs of people at all ages and all stages of life in our region**, who need a safe, decent affordable place to live.

Today's lower real estate values and foreclosures are not a substitute for robust housing policies that address the region's unmet housing needs.

There are still **unmet needs along a continuum of housing within our region**. They have been documented by local jurisdictions in a series of studies and needs assessments conducted over the last two years:

- Fairfax County's GMU Workforce Housing Needs
- Loudoun County's AECOM Study
- Arlington's Annual Goals & Targets
- City of Alexandria's Affordable Housing Initiatives Workgroup
- City of Falls Church Jones Lang LaSalle Needs Assessment

Given the economic strength of our region and the projected job growth and demand for housing in the future, recovering real estate values will rise again, pricing many households out of affordable rental housing or homeownership options.

Local and regional decision-making should align with the federal government's support for sustainable communities and the potential funding available to engage in planning for these communities.

That means planning comprehensively for land use and transportation with a goal toward **developing housing opportunities for all incomes near job centers and services**, making investments in transit, bike paths and pedestrian access, and promoting more green, compact, mixed-use development.

- Communities hardest hit with foreclosures in the current economic downturn were communities that were the least sustainable - sprawling, low density, auto-dependent development.
- Regional planning should view land use, transportation and the environment as integrated systems that require integrated solutions.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Each jurisdiction should conduct a thorough analysis of potential sources for dedicated funding to address local unmet housing needs, and annual production or preservation goals should be established.

- A shortage of housing options weakens the economic vitality of the region, forcing workers to live far from job centers, and increasing traffic congestion. If a community is to be dynamic and sustainable, it must have housing opportunities for a diverse population.
- Local housing funds provide the flexibility that is needed to create solutions that match local needs.
- Examples of funding sources could include (but are not limited to) a percentage of taxes or fees associated with real estate transactions or development.

2. Each jurisdiction should work more diligently to increase the supply of permanent supportive housing and end homelessness in a region as affluent as Northern Virginia.

- Identify and mitigate zoning and/or regulatory barriers to the production of small single room occupancy units.
- Inventory underutilized or vacant public land appropriate for residential development and promote development opportunities with subsidies or tax abatements.
- Engage more proactively with faith communities who have land holdings and a desire to provide housing, by offering technical assistance for the feasibility and pre-development phases of development.

3. Engage a broad set of stakeholders in creating strategies that support public-private partnerships to address the full continuum of housing needs.

- Establish standing advisory committees in each jurisdiction, comprised of members of the development and financial community, community-based organizations, and local governments to create a comprehensive set of strategies that could be employed to meet housing needs. 🏠