

Moving Toward Regional Housing Policies In Northern Virginia

The Alliance promotes policies and programs that address unmet needs by providing housing choices for households of all income levels. Sound housing policies affect the region's economic competitiveness and improve our quality of life. Building communities that provide a variety of housing choices supports strong families and increases the chances that children will receive a quality education.

The Alliance urges local jurisdictions to adopt the following principles to fashion a more comprehensive, cohesive set of **regional** housing policies. These principles have no priority order, as all are considered equal and necessary.

- **Develop Goals/Targets to address unmet housing needs, allocate resources, and devise an implementation strategy.** Establish an oversight committee to conduct an annual review of the goals/targets for effectiveness.
- **Implement policies that promote mixed use, mixed income development, creating housing near employment centers and transit sites.** These land use patterns reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and build upon existing infrastructure. Recognizing that many citizens require barrier-free housing and/or supportive services to live in our communities, the Alliance supports policies, programs and financial resources in each jurisdiction that specifically address **accessibility** for people with special needs.
- **Promote the concept of Green Communities, a national building standard specifically designed for affordable housing and adopted in over 20 cities and states.** Green Communities criteria consider integrated design process, location and neighborhood fabric, site improvements, water conservation, energy efficiency, materials beneficial to the environment, healthy living environment and operations and maintenance.
- **Use public land that is vacant or underutilized and suitable for residential development to provide housing for households with extremely low incomes.** Co-locate housing on sites with public facilities such as schools, libraries and government buildings. Underutilized land, including large parking lots and underperforming commercial centers must be zoned to encourage mixed-use development that includes housing for all income levels.
- **Create a dedicated, stable housing trust fund** that preserves existing housing, promotes new construction and leverages other funding sources to serve a range of incomes and housing needs for both rental and homeownership.

- **Utilize local taxing authority** such as real estate tax exemption or tax abatement to help mitigate rising operational costs for affordable housing developments.
- **Recognize the relationship between job growth and housing needs** to develop policies that raise revenue for affordable housing by assessing impact fees on new commercial development. Creating housing choices for households of all incomes is a community need and must be a community value. As such, all community stakeholders must be engaged in developing solutions. In addition to dedicated solutions from the public/private partnerships between local government and developers, our region needs:
 - **Employers to contribute by offering employee-assisted housing programs** that offer closing cost assistance, mortgage interest write-downs or rental supplements.
 - **Faith communities to be increasingly involved in addressing unmet housing needs through their own advocacy and outreach.**

Make homelessness unacceptable in a region with such wealth and resources. Area Plans to End Homelessness must contain strategies that yield positive, tangible results, providing a seamless network of services and housing options for those who are formerly homeless or with extremely low incomes.