

HOUSING

Intent

The intent of the Housing Plan is to establish a framework for providing for the housing needs of all residents of Prince William County. These needs are expressed in terms of quality, affordability, location, and amenities.

The Housing Plan states the County's commitment to clean, safe, attractive, walkable neighborhoods, and to the elimination of neighborhood blight and substandard housing. The Housing Plan recognizes that neighborhoods in which people want to live, and live safely, are neighborhoods that do not exceed the County's occupancy limitations; that are free of debris and illegally parked and stored vehicles; that maintain health and sanitation standards; that do not suffer from excessive traffic and the noise and pollution such traffic brings; neighborhoods that have sidewalks, public spaces, and streets in good condition. Furthermore, Prince William County is committed to helping neighborhoods maintain their character.

The Housing Plan also recognizes that a variety of housing types must be available to all its residents, and that there are various regulatory and programmatic mechanisms to achieve affordable housing for all segments of the County's population. Implementation of the policies and action strategies in the Housing Plan will also foster the image of Prince William County as a good place for residential and non-residential investment.

The unique situation facing Prince William County regarding foreclosures necessitates that our efforts be focused on reducing the stock of foreclosed properties before looking to any other special programs that will build additional housing. We are convinced that the combination of market forces, creative financing packages and a concerted effort to link the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) to the availability of foreclosed homes will work to the benefit of all property owners in our community.

The components of the Housing Plan are:

- Intent, Goal, Policies, and Action Strategies

GOAL: Identify sufficient locations and consistent criteria for the provision of diverse housing opportunities for all segments of the County's population.

H-POLICY 1: Preserve and improve existing neighborhoods. Ensure that Prince William County has new neighborhoods with a high quality of life.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

H1.1 Encourage the creation and continued operation and effectiveness of property owner associations within communities through recognition, coordination, and appropriate

- public awareness programs. Support efforts to create voluntary neighborhood associations to strengthen neighborhood ties and promote community maintenance initiatives.
- H1.2** Continue the voluntary joint program between representatives of property owners' associations and other community organizations in the County and appropriate code enforcement personnel to increase communication and coordination of these entities in matters pertaining to neighborhood preservation and enhancement. The County shall generate and maintain a voluntary online database of HOAs and volunteer groups with current contact information.
- H1.3** Continue to promote the formation and use of neighborhood watch and other crime prevention programs as well as close neighborhood liaison with local law enforcement agencies and other neighborhood initiatives
- H1.4** Establish procedures for determining housing conditions. Prepare a housing condition report and annually update that report. The annual housing condition report will identify geographic areas of special concern having characteristics such as large numbers of code violations, traffic safety issues, aged or deteriorating infrastructure, etc.
- H1.5** Conduct periodic Countywide evaluations of neighborhoods to prioritize the areas of the County that have above-average concentrations of inoperable or illegally parked or stored personal property (such as boats, trailers, campers, automobiles). Focus intensive code enforcement efforts in those areas.
- H1.6** Evaluate the need for and, if determined necessary, identify and adopt Code revisions that would improve the County's ability to enforce occupancy limitations, and health and maintenance standards for structures used as residences.
- H1.7** Identify the level at which safety would be compromised by traffic in existing residential neighborhoods. Also, identify mitigation actions such as traffic calming, traffic reduction, etc., to resolve undesirable impacts. The considered impacts would include but not be limited to noise, emissions, speed, and volume based, in part, on the Long-Range Land Use, Transportation, and Environment Plan chapter goals, policies and strategies.
- H1.8** Assign a high priority to those identified improvements necessary to mitigate the impacts of or reduce the volume of unsafe traffic in identified neighborhoods in state or County capital improvement programs, management plans, and budgets.
- H1.9** Identify those neighborhoods in need of new or repaired sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and street pavement or other infrastructure and supporting facilities and services. Initiate a repair and replacement program for these areas through appropriate private or public means.
- H1.10** Enhance and implement the County streetscape program in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, the Virginia Department of Forestry, the National Arbor Day Foundation,

the Virginia Department of Transportation, proffers and special use permit conditions, and local property owner associations. Add six linear street miles into the street tree program annually. Enforce that trees are maintained to ensure proper lighting and avoid sight line reduction.

- H1.11** Continue to acquire, preserve, and conserve historically significant residential buildings and related structures, in accordance with the Cultural Resources Plan.
- H1.12** Continue operation and improve the effectiveness of the County's neighborhood initiatives for providing on-going assistance and encouragement to maintain clean, safe, and un-blighted neighborhoods in compliance with local codes.
- H1.13** Continue a County-administered community housing rehabilitation program in the form of loans and grants that targets qualified low-income owner-occupants, providing rehab assistance to bring eligible properties up to HUD Housing Quality Standards. Create, identify and/or seek public and private funding sources to assist the County in upgrading housing considered to be substandard. Promote more widely, Prince William County's rehabilitation tax incentive program and expand the program to be used for more housing types, not just multi-family. Use funds from the Housing Preservation and Development Fund to supplement or leverage HUD or other funds so more units can be rehabilitated. Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) tax credits projects should also be supported when the development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance with preference given to projects for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, or projects that are proposed for rehabilitation.
- H1.14** Permit and encourage a variety of housing types and densities in individual developments in the development area through the Zoning Ordinance, in a manner that ensures compatibility and additional open space for those living in that development. Encourage planned communities in locations that are in keeping with the Long-Range Land Use Plan through appropriate incentives in the Zoning Ordinance and subdivision regulations.
- H1.15** Encourage housing that will not adversely affect the environmental quality of Prince William County in accordance with the Environment Plan. Promote "environmentally sensitive" standards through County policies.
- H1.16** Acquire open space in existing neighborhoods.

H-POLICY 2: Encourage the provision of affordable housing for all segments of the County's population with emphasis on households with incomes at or below the Area Median Income.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

- H2.1** Encourage the development, redevelopment, rehabilitation, and construction of housing at all price ranges, for all segments of the population, particularly to encourage the

location of increased business to the County to provide jobs to those who live in Prince William County. Prince William County, along with for-profit and non-profit organizations, should also capitalize on the opportunities provided by the current surplus supply of below-market homes to provide affordable housing. Prince William County shall develop measures that will recognize meaningful changes in the housing market and amend this strategy in anticipation of improved market conditions.

- H2.2** Encourage developers to provide efficiency apartments as part of their multi-family mix to accommodate single individuals affordably.
- H2.3** The County should continue to monitor the efforts of the Virginia Housing Commission.
- H2.4** Promote the development of innovative architectural housing types and universal design, taking into account current County demographics, provided that exterior design and the level of maintenance complements and is compatible with that of the surrounding area. Also, determine their public facility and service impacts. Individual agencies need to monitor and analyze innovative housing types to determine their impact on infrastructure, i.e., schools, roads, etc. The Zoning Administrator should maintain an inventory of innovative and alternative housing types approved with rezonings and site or subdivision plans, and an inventory of housing types the County wants to discourage, such as “two over two.”
- H2.5** As part of the rezoning and/or special use permit process for any project involving residential units, assisted living housing, etc., encourage developers to contribute to the Housing Preservation and Development Fund.
- H2.6** Incorporate affordable housing units in any project, where reasonable, involving residential uses through special use permit conditions and/or proffers, especially in proximity to mass transit facilities and employment centers. These units could be maintained in affordable status by deed restriction or covenant.
- H2.7** Take maximum advantage of federal and state funding for assisting income-eligible County renters in achieving home ownership.
- H2.8** With the cooperation and involvement of the private sector, provide relocation assistance and/or other protective measures as may be appropriate to residents of dwelling units that are proposed to be demolished, converted to non-residential uses, or converted from rental to fee ownership. At the time of rezoning, the County, working with the private sector, should consider identifying measures that ensure occupants are suitably housed before demolition or conversion occurs, and other protective and ownership sharing opportunities and incentives for the displaced.
- H2.9** Prevent concentrations and encourage geographic dispersion of affordable housing within the urban and suburban areas of the development area. Through the proffer system, the County may accept contributions to the Housing Preservation and Development Fund to

further our affordable housing goals, or may accept units within a housing development that are dedicated for affordable or workforce housing.

H2.10 Consider implementing an Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance.

H2.11 Establish a home help program that will make it more affordable for County, School Division, and Park Authority employees to purchase a home in Prince William County.

H-POLICY 3: Support accessible and age in place housing.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

H3.1 Revise applicable County codes to incorporate state and federal standards to better accommodate individuals with disabilities and the elderly. Consider code revisions to incorporate universal design standards.

H3.2 Ensure that the Zoning Ordinance and the Design Construction and Standards Manual (DCSM) provide for and allow housing for the elderly and individuals with disabilities. Any rezoning or special use permit for which age restricted multi-family development is proposed, should include affordable dwelling units for the elderly or individuals with disabilities, particularly projects that involve 50 or more units.

H3.3 Promote housing for individuals with disabilities and/or the elderly by encouraging small-scale community residences within residential neighborhoods.

H3.4 Establish a program that will assist individuals with disabilities and/or veterans in finding affordable and accessible housing.

H-POLICY 4: Foster public and private partnerships to address County housing needs.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

H4.1 Assist private entities in identifying and addressing neighborhood housing problems.

H4.2 Encourage the participation of for-profit and non-profit organizations in the housing delivery process.

H4.3 Promote housing issues at builders' events and in builders publications, as well as at housing fairs, and through County publications.

H-POLICY 5: Improve Prince William County's housing data base in order to better facilitate planning decisions.

ACTION STRATEGIES:

- H5.1** Establish a comprehensive Countywide central repository for housing information. Coordinate and cooperate with the public agencies that collect and use housing data.
- H5.2** Develop a Countywide housing management information system through the coordination of existing sources of housing data in Prince William County.
- H5.3** Create a system whereby affordable housing needs are identified periodically via updates to County demographics, including an analysis of what type of units were produced or preserved, the number of families/households assisted, and progress reviews towards meeting affordable housing goals.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND PLANNING TERMS

Accessible Housing: An accessible home is one which enables an individual to do what he or she needs and desires to do as independently as possible. For some, access may be as simple as adding grab bars and a tub seat in the bathroom. For wheelchair users, access may require ramping entrances, widening doorways, lowering counters, adding lever or loop-style hardware to doors and drawers, and modifying storage areas.

ADU Ordinance (Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinance): An ADU Ordinance would require developers of multifamily units (condominiums, apartments and townhouses) to set aside a portion of the units for rent or purchase by families with low to moderate incomes. In exchange, the County would give developers a bonus density, i.e., the approval to build above the median of the density range.

Affordable Housing: Housing where the occupant is paying no more than thirty percent (30%) of gross income for gross housing costs, including utility costs.

ALF (Assisted Living Facility): Assisted-Living Facilities (ALFs) are designed to accommodate frail elderly and people with disabilities who can live independently but need assistance with activities of daily living (e.g., assistance with eating, bathing, grooming, dressing, and home management activities.) ALFs provide support services such as personal care, transportation, meals, housekeeping, and laundry.

AMI (Area Median Income): Area Median Income (AMI) is the average income of persons and families living in a defined geographical area. This area could be a county or group of counties in rural areas or a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in urban areas. The AMI is determined and published annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The local AMI is used to determine individuals' and families' qualifications for various federal and state assistance programs, including affordable housing programs.

County Home Ownership Programs: Prince William County administered homeownership assistance loan programs which provide purchase loans for down-payment and closing cost assistance.

Efficiency Apartment: An efficiency apartment is a small living area with a bathroom and a kitchenette. These are more affordable than other apartments as rentals or to purchase because the living space, kitchen and bedroom are all contained in one room.

HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development): HUD's mission is to increase homeownership, support community development and increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination.

LIHTC (Low Income Housing Tax Credits): The Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) program is sponsored by the U.S. Treasury Department and administered by VHDA

(Virginia Housing Development Authority) in Virginia. The program provides a federal income tax credit to private individuals, investors or corporations who participate in the construction or redevelopment of low-income housing. The credits are taken annually over a period of ten (10) years. The program may reduce payable taxes by up to \$25,000 of non-passive income.

Prince William County Housing Preservation and Development Fund: The Prince William County Housing Preservation and Development Fund was established in December 1991 by the Prince William Board of County Supervisors. The purpose of the fund is to support a variety of activities aimed at financing, developing, constructing, and/or preserving housing that is affordable and accessible to a wide range of household incomes per the AMI.

Transitional Housing: Transitional housing is a project that is designed to provide housing and appropriate support services to homeless persons to facilitate movement to independent living within 24 months.