

**Letter Submitted By Chair, Affordable Housing Working Group  
In Support of the Housing Committee Report**

May 14, 2015

Mr. Michael McMenamain, President  
Arlington Civic Federation

Via e-mail

Dear Mr. McMenamain,

The anticipated adoption of the Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP) and approval of the Implementation Framework (IF) by the County Board at its July 2015 meeting is vital to the social and economic sustainability of our community. I want to reiterate how important the Plan and Framework are to furthering the County's continued progress to provide a range of affordable housing options for many Arlingtonians. I would also like to clear up a couple of misconceptions about the Plan and Framework that I have heard from some members of the Civic Federation. Providing a range of affordability:

- Supports our people at all ages and stages of life, such as young families who are just starting out; seniors who wish to securely age in place; families with children who are looking for stability; persons with disabilities, and hardworking employees who deserve opportunity and choices.
- Improves our neighborhoods by promoting stability; maintaining diversity; assuring the quality of the built environment and neighborhood character; and reinforcing efficient transportation and land use policies.
- Strengthens our economy by enhancing our market competitiveness; assuring employers access to workers they need for a variety of jobs; providing better access for workers to homes near their jobs; attracting the best employees; connecting business owners with a stable customer base; and allowing consumers the flexibility to spend less of their income on housing.

The values that are central to the County's vision –diversity, inclusivity, sustainability– are supported by providing a range of housing affordability. And, we know from national data that it spurs economic development. These values are a hallmark of Arlington County and actively supporting them through our policies has helped to make Arlington County a national model of a modern desirable place to live, work and play. . Without a sufficient supply of housing affordable across the income spectrum, it will become increasingly difficult for the County to attract and retain a diverse workforce and to continue to grow a vibrant, sustainable local economy in the future.

Loss of affordable housing: In 2000, a little over a quarter (26 percent) of the housing supply was affordable to households with incomes up to 60 percent of the area median income (AMI)<sup>1</sup>; in 2013 less than a tenth (9 percent) of housing remained affordable for these households. From 2000 to 2013 Arlington County lost 13,500 affordable housing units, primarily to rent increases. The result is that many long-term, low-income Arlingtonians are now severely rent burdened or overcrowded – which contributes to instability.

Public land: The Plan is focused on responding to the needs of our residents, supporting our people who have made Arlington the great place that it is. Anticipating the future needs of the County is an important function of any planning process. The plan does not propose development beyond what the County's land use based forecasts

---

<sup>1</sup> As of 2014, the regional Area Median Income (AMI) for a family of four was about \$107,000; 60% of AMI for a four-person family was \$64,500, \$58,080 for a three-person household, \$51,600 for two persons, and \$45,180 for an individual.

envision, preservation of existing market affordable housing for current residents is a key policy and strategy to meeting our needs.

Public park land: To correct some misconceptions, both the draft Affordable Housing Master Plan and County Board are explicit in not supporting the placement of stand-alone affordable housing in officially designated parks or existing natural areas. The Plan asks only that affordable housing be considered when planning for major capital investment in new or redeveloping existing major community facilities (not parks) such as was done at Arlington Mill Residences. This development was built in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Arlington Mill Community Center and provides an example of how housing and community facilities can be provided on efficiently the same site.

All affordable housing pays real estate taxes: I want to ensure the Civic Federation that the County-supported affordable housing complexes, just like other multi-family developments, pay real estate property taxes. According to an analysis of 27 affordable housing developments that have active Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) loans from the County, the properties contributed \$5.2 million in property taxes in 2014.

Schools: There has also been concern about the impact of affordable housing on schools. The Housing Division staff is committed to work more closely with APS to anticipate future needs. It should be noted, however, that in the last five years approximately 5,000 students were added to APS, but only a limited number of affordable housing units were added to our rental stock. APS tracks the growth in student population to single family homes, not affordable housing. Further, according to APS, in 2002, 40% of students were on Free and Reduced Lunch; today there are 31%.

We understand from Kathryn Scruggs, the Civic Federation's representative to the Affordable Housing Study Working Group that a motion supporting the Plan's Adoptions and Framework's Acceptance by the County Board will be voted on at the June 2, 2015 meeting. I strongly support the Civic Federation's favorable endorsement of both the Affordable Housing Master Plan and Implementation Framework so that we can better serve all Arlingtonians.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Dr. Leonard L. Hamlin Sr.  
Chair, Affordable Housing Working Group