

ACCF Meeting --- June 2, 2015 Housing Committee Report

I have served as the Arlington County Civic Federation (ACCF) representative to the Affordable Housing Study Group for the past two plus years, along with seventeen other community representatives, County Housing staff and consultants from George Mason University. The code of Virginia requires a housing component be developed and included in each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan which shall include:

...the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of affordable housing, which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated. § 15.2-2223.

Following months of orientation to data on Arlington's current housing supply and demand with projections to 2040, we began to formulate goals and policies for the Affordable Housing Master Plan and Implementation Framework found at the sites below.

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2015/05/RTA-DRAFT-AHMP.pdf>

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2015/05/DRAFT-Implementation-Framework-5.0.pdf>

Throughout the process there has been wide communication with the community: our monthly meetings have been open to the public, five community forums were held, plus more than 40 meetings with County Commissions and civic and community associations. This spring the County Board suggested five areas for further community discussion. We invite all to review and comment on the areas in a virtual survey at <http://www.peakdemocracy.com/portals/105/2622>.

At the community presentations and discussions on the Plan, County Housing staff and members of the Study Group have cleared up misconceptions about affordable housing. Some examples of the clarifications are that: Committed Affordable (CAF) developments are not all new, but mostly preserved multi-unit buildings; the non-profits are not exempt from property taxes, they do pay property taxes on CAFs; the residents in CAFs are new to Arlington, while, in fact, most come from other multi-unit developments in Arlington, where rents have increased beyond their means. Another misconception is that CAFs will be built on parkland but the Master Plan states "The County Board does not support the placement of stand-alone affordable housing in officially designated parks or existing natural areas."

Questions about geographic distribution of affordable housing and its impact on neighborhood schools have been part of robust discussions at many meetings. Recently the Plan has been revised to address those concerns.

The Civic Federation will discuss and vote on the Housing Committee's resolution supporting the Affordable Housing Master Plan at its June 2 meeting. I know not everyone is convinced that the Plan is ready for the County Board to adopt as the Affordable Housing element of the Comprehensive Plan. However, I also know that the Civic Federation members have worked together many times and made compromises that ultimately help Arlington be better for all of us.

Kathryn Scruggs
Chair, ACCF Housing Committee