

CAF STRATEGIES

APRIL 2023 REPORT

OVERVIEW

Oversight of Arlington’s committed affordable housing and support of its residents remain a priority for Arlington County. In April 2022, the County published its Long-Term Strategies for Improved Oversight and Tenant Support at Aging CAF Properties, which includes 17 strategies spanning five work areas to ensure that the more than 11,000 committed affordable (CAF) units in the County are well-maintained and tenants are supported. As a result of these strategies, the County has adjusted its model to enable more proactive oversight of CAF units and made more intentional efforts to support residents living in CAFs.

HIGHLIGHTS OF COUNTY PROGRESS

Significant progress has been made in several areas, and work will continue through 2023 and beyond. Below are some highlights from the five identified work areas.

OVERSIGHT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

- CPHD-Housing has increased CAF inspections capacity from 5-10% to 20% of the portfolio annually and is in the process of hiring an additional staff person to focus on compliance, communication and conflict resolution. See infographic on p.3 for details.
- DHS-Housing is planning to procure a vendor to increase its inspections capacity of the more than 1,800 units with occupants who receive County rental subsidies. Beginning in FY 2024, DHS will solicit proposals from vendors to support annual and special inspections of Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing Choice Voucher contracted units.
- The County has procured a vendor that specializes in environmental testing in units, including mold testing and remediation, so these services can be used as needed.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT

- Specific language was added to AHIF agreements to strengthen requirements for inspections and compliance, including reporting on progress after issues are identified. Additionally, language was added to strengthen eviction prevention measures and support resident councils at properties.
- Staff explored additional enforcement opportunities via site plan conditions. While we do not recommend pursuing this approach, it prompted further conversations around enforcement mechanisms and what is within the County's authority.

COORDINATION

- The County Manager's office has convened an interdepartmental team to discuss CAF properties and their needs. The team includes representation from five departments and ten program areas and has met quarterly since June 2022. This effort has helped develop and grow relationships among agencies and has already resulted in improved coordination. For example, the County's environmental health team has received and addressed several service request referrals from CPHD and DHS for CAF properties, and relevant agencies have improved internal code enforcement referral processes.
- DHS-Housing has requested a new position for a Landlord Engagement Analyst to improve communications and relationships with landlords, specifically related to DHS programs and subsidies. The position is expected to be filled in FY 2024.
- The County Manager's Office and County Board Office are implementing a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform that provides utility to track constituent inquiries and interactions, as well as support advisory commission recruitment and coordination processes. This platform will add needed technology capacity to further advance work in interdepartmental coordination and communication.

PROBLEM SOLVING

- The County's Tenant Landlord Commission, with support from County staff, is researching potential models for alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to provide an additional resource to address tenant and landlord conflicts. Recommendations are expected in 2023.
- A discussion group made up of commissioners, County staff, and advocates has been assessing the potential creation of resident councils at CAF properties and other strategies for tenant engagement. The current plan is to support the formation of a resident council at one property and to create a requirement in future County Agreements for at least two annual resident meetings at other CAF properties.

- All housing staff from CPHD and DHS have participated in customer service and racial equity training.
- A Housing Locator is actively tracking vacancies in the community to support nonprofit homeless service providers and clients experiencing homelessness. Efforts are underway to recruit private landlords/ property owners who rent at affordable rates to include them in the housing inventory of DHS programs. This includes further education of the various forms of supportive services and rental subsidy programs available in the community. In addition, DHS was recently granted a FTE overstrength position to actively recruit for an added Housing Locator to work with low-income households impacted by evictions or in need of relocation supports.

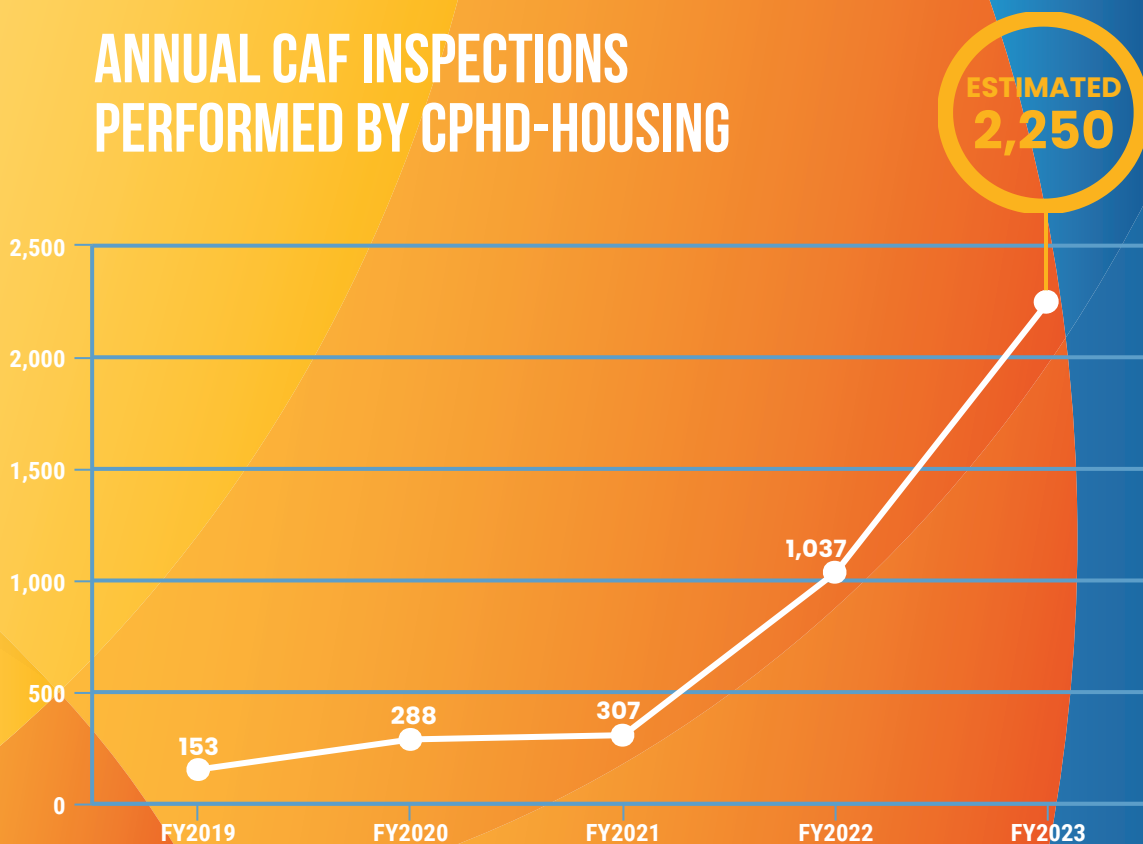
COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

- The County is using one-time funding to reach approximately 500 households in CAF units (through surveys and focus groups) to learn about the resident experience and what additional resident supports may be helpful.
- Bilingual user-friendly outreach materials that describe County services available to residents are being developed and will be distributed to all CAF properties in summer 2023.
- Several countywide events incorporated education on tenant rights and responsibilities as well as available resources, including the Live in Arlington Information Fairs in October 2022 and April 2023, and a Tenant Summit to be held in June 2023.
- In 2022, the Arlington County Public Health Division (ACPHD) mailed all CAF properties an outreach letter encouraging property management to contact Environmental Health Technicians to receive a free consultation on pest control.

In addition to the highlights above, more details on the status of specific strategies can be found in the appendix.

While a lot of progress has been made, the County continues its efforts to improve oversight and tenant supports and will continue to report on progress as part of its annual Affordable Housing Master Plan report, beginning in 2024.

ANNUAL CAF INSPECTIONS PERFORMED BY CPHD-HOUSING



APPENDIX

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVED OVERSIGHT AND TENANT SUPPORT AT AGING CAF PROPERTIES

ACTION	STATUS
Immediate Actions (FY 2022)	
Complete CAF inspections at six properties with approximately 1,200 units	Completed
CAF resident outreach and support- identify concerns and potential solutions to understand what supports would be most helpful and learn how it can best engage with residents	In process: CAF resident survey underway, report expected June 2023
Strengthen requirements in loan documents for inspections and compliance, including reporting on progress after issues are identified.	Completed
Plan for improvements and maintenance needs, including ensuring future rehabilitation/renovation scopes of work address major infrastructure/systems issues at County- financed properties.	Completed
Develop plan to invest in ongoing capital needs, including plan for property needs assessment by owner and plan for financing future improvements.	Completed
Streamline online resources to make tenant and landlord information and resources user-friendly and easy to find on the County website.	In process
Oversight and Asset Management	
Improve the County's oversight framework - review compliance policies, procedures and practices and work with other jurisdictions to recommend a plan.	In process: An interdepartmental team confirmed HQS standards and discussed inspections process with property managers and owners so it can be efficient and effective. Collaboration will continue on relevant issues. Lead-free and asbestos mitigation will only be relevant when renovations occur.
Identify resources needed to ensure adequate oversight.	In process: DHS and CPHD have both added (or are adding in FY 2024) additional inspections capacity, through new staff and/or vendor
Conduct capital needs assessment in order to estimate the future costs of property maintenance, repairs, and upkeep.	Completed: Upon analysis, County staff determined that industry standards typically require developers to employ third parties to conduct capital needs assessments. A new clause in loan agreements provides the County with the ability to require assessments be paid for by the developer and submitted to the County.
Research models for investing in capital needs.	Completed: Upon analysis, County staff determined that most jurisdictions do not fund capital needs projects for properties unless there is an extenuating circumstance or if there's a refinance or rehabilitation. As a result, County staff will continue to work with owners on capital needs of CAF properties and appropriate funding sources to address these needs.
Review code enforcement approach.	In process: Relevant agencies are coordinating to improve internal referral system, including how to address legal challenges (e.g. access to units with permission from resident)

Capital Investment	
Explore other avenues for enforcing County oversight (<i>specifically site plan conditions</i>)	Completed: Interdepartmental team explored potential enforcement opportunities via site plan conditions, and as a result of these conversations, do not recommend pursuing this approach. Specifically, site plan conditions must have an essential nexus to the project, such as addressing impacts of a development project. Mandating any habitability standards via site plan condition are beyond the scope of the County's authority in approving site plans.
Coordination	
Strengthen interdepartmental coordination.	Completed: an interdepartmental housing coordination team has been created to meet regularly and share issues/solutions. Quarterly meetings are led by the CMO and have been held in June, September, and December 2022 and March 2023 with CPHD, DHS, OHR, APD, ACPD, CMO.
Evaluate staffing approach to link enforcement with proactive education and outreach.	Completed: CPHD Housing and Inspection Services are collaborating more closely on potential CE issues and referrals. In addition, code enforcement staff are participating in regular outreach activities, including the Live in Arlington Information Fairs.
Evaluate use and deployment of relationship management systems.	In process: The County has launched a customer relationship management (CRM) system in areas including constituent inquiries and advisory commission recruitment and coordination. This will enable greater coordination among County departments.
Streamline customer experience.	In process: The County has launched a welcome desk at the Bozman government center, and will continue to explore 311 or other centralized access points.
Problem solving	
Support strategies developed by joint Housing Commission/Tenant Landlord Commission subcommittee.	Completed: Coordinated with joint Housing Commission/Tenant Landlord Commission subcommittee on preparing and reviewing recommendations and follow up where County resources allow.
Expand thirdparty conflict resolution.	Completed: Entered into new agreement with communitybased organization BUGATA, with increased resources and additional focus on tenant landlord conflict resolution.
Explore requiring owners to provide tenant supports.	In process: the County has added provisions to County loan agreements requiring eviction prevention plans and support of resident councils (funding and space). Additionally, County staff has convened a discussion group that includes commissioners, County staff, and advocates to assess the potential creation of resident councils at CAF properties and other strategies for tenant engagement. First steps potentially will be formation of a resident council at one property and creating a requirement in future loan agreements for a certain number of resident meetings at each property.

Strengthen role of Tenant-Landlord Commission in dispute resolution.	In process: the County is continuing to provide training to TLC members in areas such as the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act and tenant organizing, and the TLC is developing strategies to promote its role.
Train staff to better handle tenant communications.	In process: All CPHD and DHS housing staff have participated in customer service and racial equity training, with continuing education underway.
Create an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) option.	In process: The Tenant Landlord Commission is conducting research on gaps and potential models with preliminary report and recommendations expected in summer or fall 2023.
Communication and Outreach to Residents	
Do targeted education and outreach.	In process: Countywide Live In Arlington Information Fairs held in fall 2022 and spring 2023, including workshops on fair housing, rights and responsibilities, and other relevant topics. Bilingual and user-friendly outreach materials will be distributed to all CAF properties in summer 2023. In addition, a first-ever Tenant Summit will be held in summer 2023 with workshops on tenant rights and responsibilities, County resources, and tenant organizing. Also, the County is updating online resources for residents on how to apply for assistance and other resources.
Provide feedback opportunities for CAF residents.	In process: Using County one-time funding, community-based organization BUGATA is conducting focus groups and interviews with 400-500 CAF households, with final report expected in June 2023.