



**Arlington County  
Housing Commission  
2024 Annual Report  
January 16, 2025**

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# A Message from the Chair

Arlington County experienced a number of significant developments within housing policy in 2024. Most notably, a circuit court overturned the Expanded Housing Opportunities (EHO) ordinance adopted by the County Board in 2023. The EHO ordinance stemmed from the Missing Middle Study and aimed to end Arlington’s exclusionary zoning practices. While the County Board is appealing the decision, existing EHO projects face an uncertain future and new projects have been put on hold, reducing the opportunities for diverse housing projects in many residential neighborhoods across the county.

County staff unveiled their recommendations from the Housing Grant Review, which included multiple changes to the Housing Grant program—a unique local housing voucher subsidy serving low-income individuals with disabilities, elderly residents, and families with children—to expand eligibility and serve more residents in need. County staff also publicly shared recommendations from the Homeownership Study to increase homeownership opportunities for first-time homebuyers, especially among historically marginalized groups. Many of the Housing Grant and Homeownership program changes are contingent upon County Board funding and face competing needs from multiple other housing programs and non-housing related needs.

Additionally, the Housing Commission heard from county staff regarding significant challenges to achieving Arlington’s goal to functionally end homelessness by 2026—ensuring that any resident who becomes homeless quickly finds a permanent home and does not experience homelessness again—due to the lack of available affordable housing, rental vouchers, and other supports needed to meet this ambitious objective. Unhoused individuals continue to experience months-long waits before getting access to the county’s network of homeless shelters and access to permanent, affordable housing. With federal funding related to the pandemic dried up, the county faces new budgetary challenges and increasing need within the community.

The Housing Commission was able to work with the County Board to secure adoption of Source of Funds protection for low-income residents who receive government subsidies. Following several years of advocacy, the County Board amended the Human Rights Ordinance to ban housing discrimination based on a renter’s source of income. This achievement, aligned with the goals of the Fair Housing Plan adopted by the County Board in 2023, was an important step to furthering fair housing in Arlington.

The challenges facing our community are significant, but the county continually demonstrates an ability to serve our most vulnerable residents. I’m looking forward to working with my fellow commissioners, partners, staff, and County Board members to advance affordable and fair housing in the new year!

Sincerely,

Kellen MacBeth  
Chair, Housing Commission

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# Purpose

The Housing Commission serves as the chief advisory commission to the County Board on housing issues in Arlington County. The Commission will serve a variety of functions aimed at advising the County Board on County housing conditions, trends and needs, and developing policy recommendations. The Housing Commission submits this annual report to inform the County Board and the public of its work and accomplishments in 2024.

# Membership

- Kellen MacBeth, Chair
- Katie Wenger, Vice Chair
- Nikki Blake
- Bryan Coleman (joined October 2024)
- Elizabeth Escovar
- Michael Hemminger (departed September 2024)
- Zackary Linick
- Margaret McGilvray
- Anika Montgomery
- Haley Norris (departed February 2024)
- Sara Rubalcava (departed September 2024)
- Danny Ross (joined February 2024)
- Jason Schwartz (joined February 2024)
- Karen Serfis
- Joe Ventrone (joined March 2024)

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# Areas of Focus

In the Housing Commission's 2024 Work Plan, the Commission identified four main objectives for its work during the year:

- a) Maintaining and strengthening role as chief advisory commission to County Board on housing issues;
- b) Identifying policy areas where the Housing Commission can provide its knowledge and experience to provide a positive impact upon the policy process;
- c) Oversight of affordable housing properties and reviewing programs and policies to support affordable housing residents; and
- d) Continue its collaboration with a variety of stakeholders in 2024, all with the goal of better integrating adjacent concerns and issues into housing discussions and better informing the Commission's recommendations to the County Board.

## Strengthening the Commission's Role as Chief Advisor to the County Board on Housing Issues

The Housing Commission continued to build upon the progress made in 2023 to strengthen its role as chief advisory commission to the County Board regarding housing matters, again most notably ensuring that the Commission was represented at nearly every regular County Board meeting in 2024, especially those where items upon which the Commission made a formal recommendation were up for action before the Board. Chair MacBeth also kept in regular contact with the Housing Director (Anne Venezia), the Housing Commission Liaisons (County Board Members Matt De Ferranti and Susan Cunningham), representatives from the Planning Commission, Tenant-Landlord Commission, and Commission on Aging, and various county officials, stakeholders, and community members. The County Board also appointed Katie Wenger Vice Chair, and she established a strong partnership with the Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2). The Commission added four new Commission members (Bryan Coleman, Danny Ross, Jason Schwartz, and Joe Ventrone) to better reflect Arlington's diverse communities with respect to backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

The Commission continued to work with county staff to ensure that equity-related information is collected and available for the Commission to consider before making recommendations to the County Board in line with the Housing Commission's Equity Framework, adopted in 2023.

The Commission also seriously engaged with the draft Commission Advisory Handbook, providing extensive and thoughtful feedback on proposed changes to ensure that the Housing Commission retains the ability to use necessary tools and processes to gather information and communicate with county staff, County Board, and the public.

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# Identifying and Engaging with Stakeholders on Critical Housing Policy Issues

## Homeownership Subcommittee

The Homeownership Subcommittee, responsible for collaborating with county staff to provide input and feedback to shape Arlington’s Homeownership Study, met in September and October. The Subcommittee provided feedback to county staff on their Homeownership Report and recommendations. The subcommittee was chaired by Commissioner Serfis.

The final report recommended modifications to the following programs to strengthen homeownership:

- Moderate-Income Purchase Assistance Program (MIPAP)
- Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Program
- Condominium Support
- Education and Technical Assistance
- Real Estate Tax Relief (RETR) Program

The final report also recommended the creation of the following new programs to build on the work of existing programs to strengthen homeownership:

- Homebuyer Cohort Pilot Program
- Home Improvement Loan Program
- Homeownership Production Fund Pilot

## Source of Funds Protection

At its January 11, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission voted 9-0 to recommend amending the Human Rights Ordinance to add Source of Funds protection. Protecting Arlington residents from housing discrimination is an important responsibility of county government. The Virginia General Assembly added Source of Funds as a new protected class to the Virginia Fair Housing Law in 2020. The Housing Commission urged the County Board to update its Human Rights Ordinance to begin enforcing Source of Funds protections.

### **Results:**

In March 2024, the County Board amended its Human Rights Ordinance to include source of funds as a protected class to begin enforcing protections for residents with Housing Choice Vouchers, Housing Grants, and other subsidized income.

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## Red Lion Inn Site Plan

At its January 11, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the Red Lion Inn site plan project. The Commission was overwhelmingly in support of the project. The Commission voted 9-0 to support the staff recommendation and approve the project. The project achieves many Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP) goals, such as increasing the amount of family sized units and preventing the loss of market rate affordable housing.

Commission discussion focused primarily on the temporary relocation of current residents. The Commission asked the developer to stay in regular communication with residents about the redevelopment plans and to communicate to residents what programs they are eligible for during the relocation, including the Tenant Assistance Fund (TAF). The Commission also made a point to ask the developer to work with neighboring properties that provide comprehensive resident services that are typically offered at affordable housing properties since there are 22 Committed Affordable units (CAFs) at this site. The Commission encouraged the applicant to implement an eviction prevention program at the property and work with CAF residents to ensure they feel comfortable and empowered in the newly redeveloped property.

### **Results:**

In January 2024, the County Board voted to approve the Red Lion Inn site plan.

## Columbia Pike FBC Elder Care Amendment

At its February 15, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the Columbia Pike Form Based Code Elder Care Amendment. The Commission voted to approve the staff recommendation 9-0. The Commission discussed who would benefit from this proposal. The Commission also discussed the definition of elder care and what uses would fall under that definition.

### **Results:**

In February 2024, the County Board voted to approve the Elder Care Amendment to the Columbia Pike Form Based Code, establishing elder care vehicle and bicycle parking requirements, and updating the affordability requirements for elder care development projects.

## Crystal House 3 9% AHIF Allocation

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At its February 15, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the Crystal House 3 9% Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) Allocation. The Commission was overwhelmingly in support of the project. The Commission voted 9-0 with one abstention to support the staff recommendation and approve the AHIF allocation and revitalization resolution. The project will add a significant number of Committed Affordable Units (CAFs) to the county's affordable housing supply. It will serve those at very low incomes and families, both of which are Housing Commission and county priorities.

Commission discussion was brief, with the main topic being accessibility. The Commission also asked clarifying questions on the phasing of the overall Crystal House project and the revitalization resolution. The Commission approved the project unanimously, with one abstention by Commissioner Norris due to a conflict of interest. The Commission is excited to see future Crystal House funding requests and eventual delivery of CAFs at the site. The Commission also encouraged the county and Applicant to support a Resident Council at the property to empower tenants and ensure they have a forum to voice concerns and address issues.

**Results:**

In February 2024, the County Board voted to approve the Crystal House 3 9% AHIF allocation.

Goodwill Site Plan

At its February 15, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the Goodwill site plan project. The Commission was overwhelmingly in support of the project. The Commission voted 9-0 to support the staff recommendation and approve the site plan and revitalization resolution. The project adds 128 Committed Affordable Units (CAFs) to the county's affordable housing supply. This includes 94 family sized units, 14 Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) units and units affordable up to 30% and 50% of Area Median Income (AMI).

Commission discussion focused on two main topics. The Commission asked the Applicant questions about pedestrian safety before discussion shifted to questions around ensuring there is a tenant voice at the site. The Commission noted that it appreciates the work AHC has done since the Serrano crisis in 2021 to improve the resident experience and is excited for this new project to move forward.

**Results:**

In February 2024, the County Board voted to approve the Goodwill Site Plan.



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## Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

At its March 7, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the County Manager's proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. The Commission voted unanimously to approve a list of recommendations. These were:

1. **AHIF** – Increase AHIF funding to \$30M to ensure that the county has additional funds in upcoming fiscal years to contribute to increases in CAF supply. There are several upcoming (re)development projects for CAFs that are at risk of not having AHIF funding at a time when construction costs and interest rates are making affordable housing development more expensive.
2. **Committed Affordable Unit (CAF) Quality** – Provide adequate funding for the implementation of the Long-term Strategies for Improved Oversight and Tenant Support at Aging CAF Properties issued in April 2022 and the recommendations from the Joint Subcommittee on the Status of Aging Properties Serrano Report issued in October 2022. Specifically:
  - a. Increase staffing for CPHD Housing Division including a Deputy Director position.
  - b. Increase funding for the formation and support of resident councils at CAF properties.
3. **Fair Housing Plan Implementation** – Provide adequate funding for the implementation of Regional Fair Housing Plan (Approved by the Board in Summer 2023) goals and strategies. Specifically:
  - a. Provide additional funding for the Office of Human Rights to do expanded Fair Housing Testing in FY2025.
  - b. Provide additional funding to the Office of Human Rights to expand enforcement of Source of Funds protection (adopted by the County Board as an amendment to the Human Rights Ordinance in 2024) to ensure that residents with housing grants and housing choice vouchers are not denied housing illegally.
4. **Housing Grants Administration** – Provide funding to enhance the Housing Grants client management system, Yardi, to expand its capacity to improve program administration.
5. **Homelessness Support** – Provide adequate funding for the implementation of the county's strategic plan to functionally end homelessness in the next four years including:
  - a. More short-term rental subsidies (like flexible Rapid Rehousing) that also create pathways for undocumented residents to stable housing.
  - b. Supportive services resources to attract and retain case managers to do the work.
  - c. More behavioral health resources and Permanent Supportive Housing.
  - d. A continued portfolio of housing for all subsidized households on the low-income stream.
6. **Equity Analysis** – Provide adequate funding for regular equity analysis for all housing and planning projects.

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7. **Planning Capacity** – Preserve the two planning positions (proposed to be cut) within CPHD to ensure that staff have the capacity to support revisiting the East Falls Church area plan and recommendations to improve the Affordable Housing Ordinance and related state enabling legislation.

**Results:**

In April 2024, the County Board adopted some of the Housing Commission’s recommendations in their FY2025 budget:

- Included \$21.5 million for the Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF), the largest allocation yet and a \$6.2 million increase from 2024.
- Included \$15.1 million for Housing Grants, a \$0.7 million increase from 2024.
- Included \$5.7 million for Permanent Supportive Housing, a \$0.3 million increase from 2024.
- Included \$4.3 million for eviction prevention, a \$0.3 million decrease from 2024 but with the addition of 2 full-time employees.
- Restored the two planning positions within CPHD that were proposed to be cut.

Barcroft Master Financing and Development Plan (MFDP)

At its July 11, 2024, virtual public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the Barcroft MFDP. The Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the MFDP, 2024 updates to the Columbia Pike Initiative – A Revitalization Plan and Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan, amendments to the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) Map and Booklet, and amendments to the Master Transportation Plan by the County Board. The Commissioners asked questions about the feasibility of the proposed height and density, input from residents during the public engagement process, new tools being explored with this proposal, specific sustainability elements proposed for renovations and new construction, and opportunities to naturalize the Doctor’s Run channel. Members also asked about the tenant relocation process and eligibility of current residents to move into new construction affordable buildings.

The Commission looks forward to the continued renovation of Barcroft units and the eventual delivery of new construction CAFs and market rate housing at the site. The Commission also applauds efforts by the applicant to engage tenants in all facets of the redevelopment process as well as the county and nonprofit partner efforts to establish a Resident Council on the property. These efforts to ensure that our CAF residents are empowered to fully engage in planning processes that directly impact them and their families should be a model for future CAF redevelopment.

**Results:**

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In July 2024, the County Board voted to approve the Barcroft Master Financing and Development Plan.

### 2025 General Assembly Legislative Priorities

The Housing Commission formed a Legislative Priorities Subcommittee that met three times from June, July, and August and considered a total of 24 potential legislative proposals. The subcommittee was chaired by Commissioner Blake.

The Subcommittee recommended that the Commission consider 10 legislative priorities. At its September 5, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission finalized its 2024 Legislative Priorities package. The Commission recommended that the County Board consider the following seven priorities that will advance the County’s housing vision and address the housing needs of county residents:

1. **Grant authority to Virginia localities to enforce tenant rights and protections under the Virginia Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA), especially concerning health and safety conditions.**
  - The County Board has included this item in its legislative priorities since 2021 and the Commission believes it should continue to be a priority for the county. Although Delegate Price (HB802 and HB597) patroned legislation aligned with this legislative priority in 2022, 2023, and 2024, the bills were vetoed after being passed by the Virginia House and Senate.
  
2. **Modify the Virginia State Code to enable Arlington County to amend Section 15.5.8 of the Zoning Ordinance (Affordable Housing Ordinance) to increase contributions from developers for affordable housing either through cash contributions or more affordable units.**
  - In the county’s 2023 Affordable Housing Ordinance Review, staff wrote, “The County has completed its review of the Affordable Housing Ordinance (AHO) based on specific concerns raised and has confirmed that an imbalance among the provisions within the Ordinance greatly undervalue the cash contribution option by a significant order of magnitude.” The analysis also assessed how the value of the cash contribution relative to the total development cost has changed over time. The data may indicate that “the AHO contribution amount has not kept pace with construction cost increases, [but] the results were not conclusive on this matter.” The report further stated that the “AHO

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cash contribution required from developers — in lieu of providing affordable units on-site — is about one-third to one-half the value of estimated revenue from market rate units.” Housing advocates have also suggested that Arlington’s developer contribution requirements are less than our neighboring jurisdictions such as Fairfax County and the City of Alexandria which may result in fewer community benefits for projects in Arlington compared to our neighbors. The Commission recommends that the county work with the General Assembly to craft a new law and corresponding ordinance that increases the contribution from developers for affordable housing.

**3. Establish a minimum 60-day notice requirement for landlords (subject to the VRLTA) to not renew a lease agreement.**

- The VRLTA currently includes a requirement that landlords provide no less than 60 days’ notice of intent to terminate the tenancy prior to the end of the rental agreement term for landlords using Virginia’s default lease agreement. However, for landlords who choose to create their own leases, it is up to the landlord to specify how much notice will be provided to a tenant if the landlord decides not to renew the lease agreement. The Housing Commission recommends that Virginia require all leases to provide a minimum of 60 days’ notice of intent to not renew a lease agreement (excepting periodic tenancies) to ensure that renters have sufficient time to find a new home.

**4. Increase funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund (VHTF) and continue the Housing Opportunity Tax Credit (HOTC) beyond the current sunset date of 2025.**

- The VHTF creates and preserves affordable housing and reduces homelessness in the commonwealth similar to Arlington’s Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) through competitive loans and grants. The Commission believes that much more funding is needed to ensure that Virginia increases its supply of affordable housing.
- The HOTC can support Arlington’s affordable housing projects if they win the competitive process, but it is set to sunset at the end of 2025. For example, the AHC/Goodwill project will be awarded credits for the 2024 cycle, bringing over \$6M in equity to the project. There are multiple projects in the county’s pipeline that would be eligible and likely competitive for the HOTC if it is extended beyond 2025. The Commission recommends that the HOTC be extended beyond 2025.

**5. Require that multi-family residential owners or operators provide training to staff members on their responsibilities under the VRLTA.**

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- The Housing Commission and community advocates continue to receive complaints from Arlington renters whereby their property management staff misled or communicated incorrect information about the tenant and landlord's legal responsibilities. Virginia requires multi-family residential owners and operators to receive fair housing training but not VRLTA training. The Commission believes that tenants deserve to have informed and competent building owners and property management staff who have been trained on the legal rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords under the VRLTA.

**6. Support a Faith in Housing policy that would reduce barriers and speed up the process for congregations to build affordable housing on their land.**

- Church/religious property is fast becoming one of the primary locations for new affordable housing projects in Arlington but continues to face sustained opposition from residents who do not want affordable housing in their neighborhoods. The Housing Commission supports a Faith in Housing Bill that accomplishes the following goals:
  - Reduces the cost and time needed for religious congregations to redevelop their property to build affordable housing.
  - Includes a limited public engagement process that maximizes the community's ability to raise community needs and desires with the congregation/applicant while minimizing opportunities to employ delay tactics to draw out the process in hopes that the increased effort and cost will sink the project.
  - The affordable housing developed on the congregation property serves residents at 60% of area median income (AMI) or lower and is affordable for at least 99 years.
- The Housing Commission also recommends that the county advocate that the Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) and the Virginia Municipal League (VML) not oppose the policy.

**7. Require landlords to include legal aid office contact information with notice of tenancy terminations.**

- § 55.1-1202. Notice, section D of the Virginia State Code requires that legal aid contact information is provided by landlords to tenants on termination of tenancy notices for public housing and Housing Choice Voucher leases. The Commission believes that

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extending this requirement to all termination of tenancy notices will ensure that more tenants know who they can contact to enforce their rights if their tenancy is terminated.

**Results:**

In December 2024, the County Board adopted several of the Housing Commission’s recommended legislative priorities in their final legislative package:

1. Provide protection in situations of inadequate health and safety conditions.
3. Increase the notification window to 60 days for all landlords to notify tenants of a non-renewal for a multi-month lease.
4. Support a significant increase and a sustainable source of funding for the Housing Trust Fund.
5. Require training for multi-family residential staff of their responsibilities under the Virginia Rental Landlord and Tenant Act (VRLTA).

NSTA Site Plan

At its September 5, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the NSTA site plan project. The Commission was overwhelmingly in support of the project. The Commission voted 12-0 to support the staff recommendation and approve the site plan. In addition to the Affordable Housing Ordinance contribution, the project adds 10 Committed Affordable Units (CAFs) to the county’s affordable housing supply. This includes 6 family sized units, including three 3BR units. The development will also add 1 Type A accessible CAF.

The Commission discussed a desire to have taller building height at the site and greater density/heights throughout the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. The Commission also discussed the amount of on-site parking and the overall unit composition of the project and urged the developer to include as many family sized units as possible.

**Results:**

In September 2024, the County Board voted to approve the NSTA site plan.

Crystal House 3 4% AHIF Allocation and Predevelopment Loan

At its October 10, 2024, virtual public meeting, the Housing Commission considered the Crystal House 3 4% Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) allocation and predevelopment loan. The Commission supported the staff recommendation and voted 7-0, with one abstention, to recommend approval of the AHIF allocation and predevelopment loan. The Commission looks forward to adding

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hundreds of committed affordable units (CAFs) to the county's affordable housing supply with this project.

**Results:**

In October 2024, the County Board voted to approve the Crystal House 3 4% AHIF allocation and predevelopment loan.

Recovery Residences

At its September 5, 2024, and October 10, 2024, hybrid and virtual public meetings, the Housing Commission considered the Recovery Residences Zoning Ordinance Amendment. The Commission supported the staff recommendation and voted 8-0 at the October meeting to recommend approval by the County Board. The Commission discussed concerns that Arlington County's existing zoning code is discriminatory and that failure to amend the zoning code in response to Oxford House's request for reasonable accommodation would potentially violate Fair Housing laws. The Commission felt strongly that Recovery Residences should be treated like other homes for individuals with disabilities (individuals suffering from substance use disorder meet the legal definition for the disability protected class) and that it would be discriminatory to restrict them to having only four unrelated individuals in a home, instead of the eight requested by Oxford House.

Commissioners also discussed the concerns raised by some residents about the police presence at Oxford House recovery residences and other issues and agreed that the concerns are unrelated to the reasonable accommodation request and proposed zoning change. Some commissioners recommended that the county separately work with Oxford House and the concerned residents to address their issues.

Commissioners also encouraged staff to move forward with the zoning study, as referenced in the Fair Housing Plan adopted by the County Board in 2023, to look at raising the cap on more than four unrelated individuals living in a single-family home to eight unrelated individuals. Some of the commissioners expressed concern that the existing zoning ordinance discriminates against non-traditional families, renters, and low-income individuals who would like to live in Arlington's single-family neighborhoods.

Some commissioners also noted that the 2015 Affordable Housing Master Plan called for a review of the county's zoning ordinance to increase the limit on the number of unrelated persons who can occupy a single family residence to ensure that a group of persons with disabilities, including those

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with physical, or other disabilities, or senior adults have the option to live independently in the community to increase options for housing affordability.

**Results:**

In October 2024, the County Board voted to amend the zoning ordinance to allow up to 8 unrelated people to live in recovery residences in single-family neighborhoods.

Rent Stabilization Study

At its November 7, 2024, hybrid public meeting, the Housing Commission adopted a resolution to the County Board recommending that the county fund and conduct a third-party study of the potential impacts on 1) housing stability, 2) the availability of housing, and 3) the affordability of housing in Arlington County and the three main goals of the Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP), in alignment with the Housing Commission’s Equity Framework, if a rent stabilization policy were adopted within the county. The Commission also recommended that the study results be made public and used to inform upcoming legislative priorities of the Arlington County Board.

## Oversight of affordable housing properties and reviewing programs and policies to support affordable housing residents

At the November 7, 2024, Housing Commission meeting, county staff provided an update on the implementation status of many of the recommendations and strategies from the Long-Term Strategies for Improved Oversight and Tenant Support at Aging CAF Properties report to ensure that issues, like those at Serrano in 2021, do not occur again. Staff are now inspecting 20% of CAF units in the county’s portfolio annually, and the county has made additional progress collecting feedback from residents in CAF units on their experiences.

The Commission continued to monitor the reports of issues at subsidized properties and ensure that staff worked with residents and property owners to address them.



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## **Housing Commission**

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<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Commissions-and-Advisory-Groups/Housing-Commission>