



CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION ON HOUSING  
KELLEN MACBETH, CHAIR

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March 28, 2023

Hon. Christian Dorsey, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: FY24 Budget Recommendations

Dear Mr. Dorsey:

At its March 9, 2023, hybrid public hearing, the Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing discussed the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Budget as it pertains to housing policy and programs in the county. The Commission discussed its concern that overall, the proposed budget represents a significant decrease in funding for programs to house low-income residents mainly due to proposed cuts to the Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF). It also walks back previous commitments the county has made to increase oversight of aging committed affordable (CAF) units by omitting one-time funds to inspect additional CAF units that were added to the FY 2023 budget. The Commission is also concerned that the Department of Planning, Housing and Development (CPHD) Housing Division lacks the resources to fully meet the commitments made in the Long-term Strategies for Improved Oversight and Tenant Support at Aging CAF Properties report even as we've seen the need for enhanced tenant support and CAF oversight continue to be an urgent issue in our community.

The Commission has the following recommendations for inclusion in the FY2024 Budget:

- **Increase AHIF funding to FY23 levels (\$18.7M) to ensure that the county has additional funds in upcoming fiscal years to contribute to increases in CAF supply.** A significant portion of AHIF funding in the proposed budget is set-aside for debt service commitments for the Barcroft line of credit and Buckingham Village 3. Remaining funds will likely be allocated to the Crystal House infill project. This will leave almost no funding for new projects in future years at a time when the average AHIF commitment is close to \$20M a project. There are several upcoming (re)development projects for CAFs that are at risk, including the Serrano Apartments rehabilitation/redevelopment, of not having AHIF funding at a time when construction costs and interest rates are making affordable housing development more expensive. A lack of AHIF funding has also led to the cancellation of the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the last two years even though multiple affordable housing projects went unfunded the last time the county went through the NOFA process. It also contributes to uncertainty among our

affordable housing development partners about their development pipeline. If Arlington is to have any chance of meeting its commitments for new CAF units in the Affordable Housing Master Plan, it must invest in additional AHIF funding.

- **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.** County staff have done an admirable job implementing the commitments made to CAF residents following the Serrano crisis in 2019-2021 even while lacking the resources in staff or consultant support to fully implement the strategies. The Commission continues to receive reports from advocates and residents of poor conditions within CAF units and CAF tenants feeling unsupported. The Commission recommends that at a minimum, the county:
  - Increase staffing for CPHD Housing Division to include a Deputy Director position.
  - Include \$150,000 in additional funding for CAF inspections for FY2024 consistent with FY2023 funding levels.
- **Provide adequate funding for the implementation of Regional Fair Housing Plan (County Board will consider for approval in Summer 2023) goals and strategies.** County staff, Chair Dorsey, and Arlington fair housing advocates worked hard with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to develop a robust Arlington Fair Housing Plan that addresses many of the fair housing challenges facing county residents. These include that 13% of area residents who participated in MWCOG’s survey reported that they have faced housing discrimination and, alarmingly, that 75% of those residents did not report it because they didn’t think it would help, didn’t know how, or reporting requirements were too onerous. Additionally, MWCOG found that Spanish-speaking residents reported significant fears of retaliation from landlords when considering reporting substandard housing conditions and that the top types of housing discrimination facing area residents are related to income level, race or ethnicity, and source of income. However, the proposed budget does not include any additional funding to begin implementation of many of the recommendations that are urgently needed to improve Arlington’s fair housing enforcement, education, and policies. The proposed budget does not provide the Office of Human Rights any new funding to prepare for the significant changes required to implement the recommendations even as they have had to reduce the fair housing cases investigated because of resource constraints. The Commission recommends that, at a minimum, the County:

- Provide additional funding for the Office of Human Rights to do expanded Fair Housing Testing in FY2024 to include additional protected categories beyond race/ethnicity and national origin.
- **Provide adequate funding for the implementation of the county’s strategic plan to functionally end homelessness in the next four years.** The Commission is excited to see the Department of Human Services’ efforts to develop a strategy to functionally end homelessness in Arlington. This critical effort will need more resources to bring it to fruition and the county should begin investing now in ensuring that none of our residents become or remain homeless.
- **Provide adequate funding for regular equity analyses for all housing and planning projects.** The County Board committed to prioritizing equity across the county government in its 2019 Equity Resolution. The county has taken some steps to integrate an equity lens into its housing programs, namely through the extensive racial equity analysis conducted for the Missing Middle Housing zoning proposal. However, the county has not conducted an equity analysis for historically marginalized residents or residents with protected characteristics under Virginia’s Fair Housing Law (race, national origin, color, marital status, sex, gender identity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, familial status (being pregnant or having children under age 18), or source of funds or military status) for any other planning proposal or housing policy/program. Both the Housing and Planning Commissions have requested that equity analysis be included in all materials coming before the commissions but staff has lacked the resources to begin doing this analysis. If equity is truly a priority, the CPHD Housing and Planning Divisions need the resources to incorporate equity analysis into all of their work.

The Commission vote on the motion was 9-0 to approve the recommendations. Commissioners Berkey, Blake, Hemminger, Lee, MacBeth, McGilvray, Montgomery, Norris, and Serfis voted in favor.

Thank you for your consideration and support of affordable, quality, and fair housing in Arlington.

Sincerely,



Kellen MacBeth  
Chair



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April 14, 2023

## Addendum

At its April 13, 2023, hybrid public hearing, the Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing unanimously approved the following addendum to its proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Budget recommendation to the County Board.

- **Provide adequate funding for the CPHD Planning Division to increase engagement with tenants during the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) process.** The Housing Commission has been in discussions with the Planning Commission to address the lack of adequate representation from tenants directly impacted by site plans in the SPRC process. Currently, even when site plans will rehabilitate or redevelop a property with existing tenants, tenants are not invited to have representation on the SPRC. Additionally, planning staff engagement with tenants prior to the formation of the SPRC may not be adequate to reach especially vulnerable tenants, ensure they understand the details of the project and how it may impact them, and ensure their feedback is incorporated into the planning process. It goes directly against our equity principles as a county to deny 60% of Arlington residents the same opportunities afforded to homeowners in a public process because it can be more challenging to engage with them and require additional staff time and resources. The potential solutions under discussion with the Planning Commission to remain true to the county's commitment to equitably engaging with low-income and tenant communities will require, at the very least, that planning staff resources are not cut from the budget like the proposed cut of the CPHD Associate Planner position, and likely, that additional resources, either consultants or staff capacity, be added to increase the county's ability to fully engage tenants impacted by site-plans.