

Moving Toward Shorter Commutes

Data on Tenants in Affordable Rental Housing – November 2017

Workers in our metropolitan area endure commutes that have recently been ranked as the longest¹ or among the longest² in the nation. Long commutes can make it more difficult for employers to attract and retain staff;³ they can also increase air pollution, prevent employees from spending more time with their families, and result in yet more traffic congestion overall.

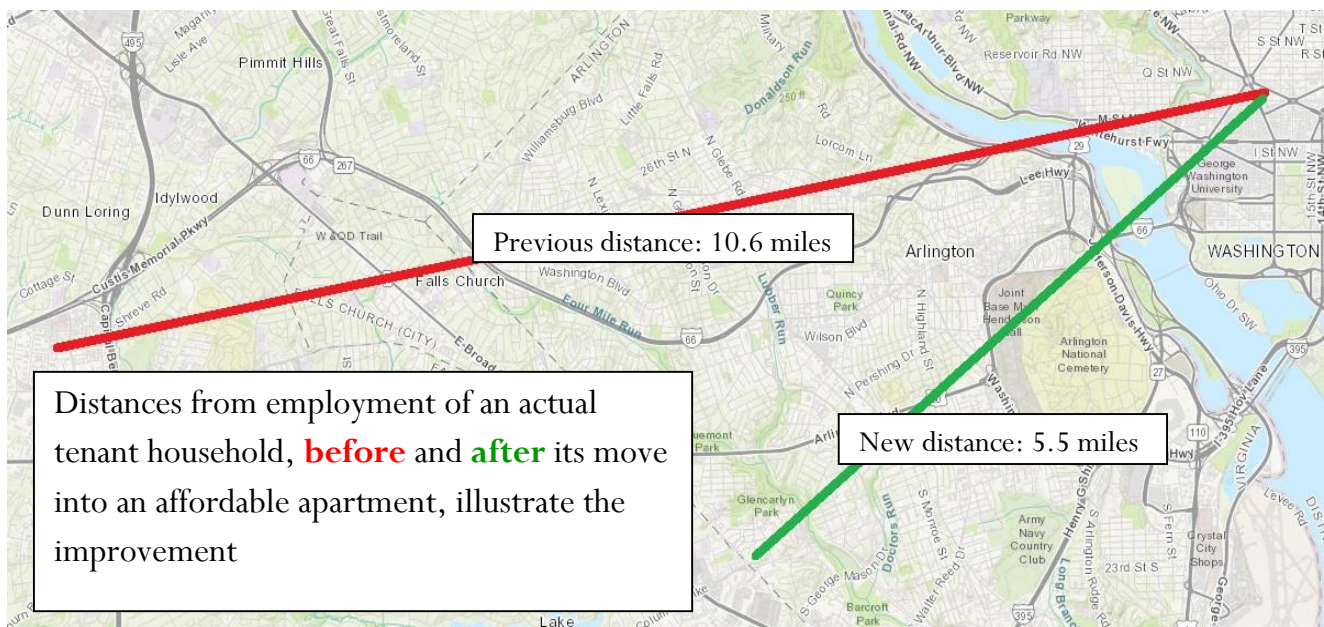
One benefit of Arlington's affordable housing is that it allows people to live closer to their places of employment. Information from working adults living in affordable rental housing suggests that they are more likely to move closer to their places of employment, rather than farther away, when they move into their affordable units.

Data for 99 employed tenants in rental housing designated “committed affordable” (“CAFs”) by the Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development shows that:

- **37% moved closer to their jobs (by at least 1/2 mile) when they moved in**
- **27% moved farther away (by at least 1/2 mile)**
- **35% did not change distance from employment more than 1/2 mile**

Furthermore:

- **Seven persons** found themselves **5 or more miles closer** to their jobs, when they moved into affordable housing, whereas only **one** was **5 or more miles farther** away.
- **Four persons** found themselves **15 or more miles closer** to their jobs, when they moved into affordable housing, whereas **no one** was **15 or more miles farther** away.



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To obtain information about the 99 working adults, County staff examined information taken from 233 households -- chosen at random from 19 properties -- who moved into their affordable rental units in 2015 or 2016. Applicants to affordable units are required to provide current addresses and verifications of income. This documentation shows the changes in distance from employment for tenants after moving into the affordable housing.

Not only were tenants in this study more likely to move closer to their places of employment, rather than farther away; the average change for the group that moved closer was greater than that of the group that moved farther away. The 27 persons who moved at least a half-mile farther away from their places of employment moved 1.7 miles farther away, on average, while the 37 who moved at least a half-mile closer moved 3.9 miles closer, on average.

Shorter commutes may:

- Reduce the miles driven by vehicles on area roads, relieving congestion
- Enable tenants to get to their jobs by foot, bike, or transit
- Save families time and/or money otherwise spent on transportation
- Help businesses attract and retain employees

Notes:

1. "Traffic Gridlock Sets New Records for Traveler Misery;" August 26, 2015, Texas A&M Transportation Institute.
2. "This town has American's lousiest commute;" April 12, 2017, Jonathan Berr, cbsnews.com.
3. "How Commute Issues Can Dramatically Impact Employee Retention," John Sullivan, TLNT, April 21, 2015.

Adults among the 233 households examined who were not included in the 99 cases used to obtain the percentages above include stay-at-home parents; retired persons; full-time workers whose place of employment could not be determined [in many cases, construction workers]; persons for whom previous residence could not be determined; and persons who moved in from outside the metropolitan area.

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