

**LWV-VA Affordable Housing Study**  
Regional and Local Housing Studies in Virginia

Below is a compilation of regional and some local studies on affordable housing. It was based on a review of websites of organizations in the Campaign for Housing and Civic Engagement (CHACE), which is a collaboration of housing advocates and providers throughout Virginia working to bring housing issues to the forefront of the political discussion. Reports/studies were also received from Housing Virginia and AHSC members. Each entry includes the name of the organization, the name, date and link to the study, and analysis of the degree to which the study looks at how to address the housing needs of those at 50% of AMI, and, where possible, either an executive summary, or some other summary of the report. The studies are organized alphabetically by area of the State.

## **Northern Virginia**

Alexandria Chamber of Commerce

2020 Legislative Agenda

Fall 2019

<https://www.thechamberalx.com/uploads/2/8/6/0/28600525/2020legislativeagenda.pdf>

Analysis: This report has as its fourth legislative priority for 2020 that the City of Alexandria expand and allocate funding for affordable and workforce housing. While it focuses on housing for groups above our 50% of AMI cut off, it is clear in its call for greater affordability and specifically recommends that the City:

Incentivize the creation of workforce housing stock. Workforce Housing, as defined by the Urban Land Institute, is: “housing that is affordable to households earning 60 to 120 percent of the area median income.”

Better formulate a comprehensive and achievable Citywide Housing Master Plan, benchmarking housing stock in Alexandria with respect to the Greater Washington Metropolitan Region.

Support funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund, which provides support to affordable housing projects while making a significant impact on Virginia’s economy.

Work regionally to implement incentives for developers to build additional density to increase the overall supply of affordable housing in the area.

Arlington County

Affordable Housing Master Plan

September 2015 (currently under five-year review for revision in 2020)

<https://housing.arlingtonva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2015/12/AHMP-Published.pdf>

Analysis

The Affordable Housing Master Plan (AHMP) was developed as Arlington County’s long- range vision for addressing housing needs through 2040 in fulfillment of the Code of Virginia. The AHMP defines Arlington County’s affordable housing policy and is reviewed and revised as necessary at least once every five years to account for changing conditions. The Affordable Housing Implementation Framework is a companion document that describes the tools and strategies available to be employed to fulfill the goals established by this Affordable Housing Master Plan. The plan sets as one of its goals that:

By 2040, 17.7% of the County’s housing stock should be affordable rentals to meet the needs of renter households with incomes at or below 60% AMI [and that] 28.4 percent of new ownership stock added by 2040 should be affordable to households between 80% and 120% AMI.

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Metropolitan Washington Council of Government

The Future of Housing in Greater Washington

September 10, 2019

<https://www.mwcog.org/documents/2019/09/10/the-future-of-housing-in-greater-washington/>

**Analysis:** COG draws on the Urban Institute Study housing gap analysis (above) and makes a series of recommendations. Its “affordability” target is that at least 75 percent of new housing should be affordable to low- and middle-income households:

As the region considers the amount and location of new housing needed to align with future growth, local leaders must also ensure it is priced appropriately for those who will need it. When housing is affordable, residents can build savings, invest in health care, education, childcare, and more.

In a presentation to the COG Board of Directors in June 2019, the Urban Institute revealed that many area households are “housing cost-burdened,” meaning a family spends more than 30 percent of its income on housing. Those in the lowest to middle household income brackets are most burdened. 22 Occupations in these bands might include service workers, nursing attendants, paramedics, security guards, firefighters, and graphic designers, among others.

Currently, too few housing units are affordable for these households, and the situation is getting worse. According to the Urban Institute, in the recent past the region’s low-cost housing

stock—or units that cost \$0 - \$1,299 per month—totaled 540,000 units.<sup>23</sup> Further, the region lost more than 13,000 units in these low-cost bands each year between 2010 and 2017. If the region continued to lose low cost housing at this rate between 2020 and 2030, a quarter of the stock in this cost band would be eliminated, affecting more than 365,000 people. (Page 15)

## Summary

This is a report on the effort by area officials and housing and planning directors to work together at COG to address the region's unmet housing needs. Specifically, the work to determine the amount of housing needed to address the regional shortfall, the ideal location for new housing to optimize and balance its proximity to jobs, and the cost of new units to ensure they are priced appropriately for those who need them. This information gathering, data analysis, and consultation with officials and partners resulted in three proposed regional housing targets for COG member governments to pursue.

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Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance

Building Northern Virginia's Future: Policies to Create a More Affordable, Equitable Housing Supply  
JANUARY 2019

[https://nvaha.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NVAH001\\_1901\\_SupplyPapers-MAIN-FinalWeb.pdf](https://nvaha.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NVAH001_1901_SupplyPapers-MAIN-FinalWeb.pdf)

## Analysis

The study's recommendations provide advocates, policymakers and practitioners with a range of ideas for improving affordability across the income spectrum while advancing social equity. The ordering of these recommendations reflects the notion that the most urgent action should be directed to the areas of greatest need and to the region's most vulnerable residents. While the report avoids using the "% of AMI" terminology, it is clear from its graphics that it is trying to draw particular attention to those whose incomes are below 30% of AMI and to those that fall in the 30-60% of AMI, while also noting the crowding out effect on lower income households created when high income households buy or rent lower cost housing. It notes that low-income households – and renters in particular – are the most cost burden in the region and are most vulnerable to market shifts and rising costs. It accordingly calls for efforts to create a more affordable housing stock to prioritize the needs of these households.

## Abstract

As the inner-Northern Virginia region has experienced population and economic growth, housing supply has not kept up with demand. This has contributed to housing affordability challenges. Though no single factor is responsible for the region's supply-demand imbalance, the local land use and regulatory framework can be particularly impactful on the region's affordability. However, addressing affordability across the income spectrum involves more than developing more units. Adding new housing supply may have varying impacts on affordability, particularly for those with the lowest incomes. An equitable approach to development addresses supply needs across multiple dimensions, including tenure, building type, and location/neighborhood characteristics.

This report offers recommendations to advocates, policymakers and practitioners for improving affordability across the income spectrum while advancing social equity. The recommendations reflect the notion that the most urgent action should be directed to the areas of greatest need and to the region’s most vulnerable residents. Recommendations are organized into four categories:

Proactively preserve and expand housing options for the region’s low-income and historically marginalized households;

Increase market-rate development and diversify the region’s housing stock to accommodate household and job growth;

Undertake bureaucratic improvements to improve the efficiency of current policies;

Improve communications and community engagement processes to better facilitate the policy changes necessary to improve affordability.

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The Urban Institute

Meeting the Washington Region’s Future Housing Needs

September 4, 2019

<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/meeting-washington-regions-future-housing-needs>

**Analysis:** This extensive 139-page report, which analyses the DMV region, looks in detail at the housing constraints faced by a range of income levels, from 30 percent of monthly income up to higher income levels:

Based on households’ income, we calculated what housing costs would be “affordable” for those with incomes eligible for housing assistance—30 percent of monthly income—or, if they had middle or higher incomes, what they were likely to pay, i.e. “desired costs” . . . As might be expected given the high rates of housing cost burden for households shown in table 2, comparing households’ housing needs (that is, what they can afford or are likely to pay as a share of income each month), to actual costs paid by the occupants of the housing stock reveals a serious mismatch. . . there are gaps of 204,000 units to meet the needs of the households that can only afford the lowest-cost units and a gap of 60,000 units for those who could afford low-cost units. (page 34)

Abstract

The Washington region faces serious housing challenges that undermine many residents’ well-being. Constrained housing supply, coupled with regional growth, pushes up rents and prices for existing housing. These pressures cause especially steep housing cost increases and displacement in some communities that have historically been home to people with low and moderate incomes and people of color.

The arrival of new businesses, jobs, and residents could intensify today's housing challenges, unless the region's leaders come together to address them. Absent a substantial increase in the supply of housing, more households competing for an already constrained stock of units will further increase prices and rents and exacerbate displacement pressures.

Inaction on housing affordability challenges could ultimately undermine the region's future economic growth and prosperity. Housing challenges like these can undermine worker productivity, make it harder for companies to attract and retain employees, and discourage companies from locating in the area. Recent job and population trends suggest that housing constraints and affordability challenges may already be slowing employment growth and causing people to leave the Washington region.

Government, business, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders can join together on shared 10-year targets, committing to evidence-based actions to achieve a healthy housing market and ensuring that the region's housing market supports economic prosperity and serves all its residents. Such targets would do the following:

**Shrink the existing affordability gap.** Today, the number of low-cost housing units falls short of household needs by 264,000.

**Boost housing production to keep pace with growth.** At the economic growth rate projected by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the region needs 374,000 more housing units by 2030; faster growth would require more.

**Align more housing units with expected household needs and resources.** The region needs at least 40 percent more middle-cost housing units to match expected needs.

Meeting these targets requires local governments across the region to strengthen or expand existing policies and adopt new strategies to advance three key objectives. First, they need to make targeted investments that preserve existing affordable low-income housing units. Second, they should make it easier and more attractive for the private sector to produce more housing at different affordability levels, especially in the middle-cost range. And third, they should protect both renters and homebuyers from discrimination and involuntary displacement.

There is no silver bullet solution to these challenges. Every jurisdiction should pursue a portfolio of policies and investments tailored to its needs and capacities. Local governments can draw upon tools that deploy their regulatory authorities, their funding resources, and their leadership and convening capacities. Analysis of the estimated contribution of all available policy tools highlights 12 with high potential for the Washington region. Expanding or strengthening these tools in the jurisdictions where they already exist, and implementing where they do not, should be a priority.

The region's philanthropic and business leaders also have critical roles to play. These leaders can prioritize future-focused, region-wide perspectives, promote strategic planning and goal-setting, build public understanding and support, and monitor progress. Their capacities for convening and thought leadership could help create an enduring, cross-sector commitment to addressing the region's current and future housing challenges.

## Central Virginia

The Central Virginia Regional Housing Partnership of the Jefferson Planning District Commission  
Comprehensive Regional Housing Study and Needs Assessment

April 2019

<http://tjpd.org/media/CVRHP-Housing-Needs-Assessment-Packet-web.pdf>

### Analysis

This analysis gives a good overview of the state of affordable housing for the Central Virginia region around Charlottesville, and including Albemarle, Greene, Fluvanna, Louisa, and Nelson Counties. It looks at the causes and forces perpetuating the mismatch between housing costs and incomes and dives deeply into six topics: housing supply; land development policies; transportation; funding; incomes; and discrimination. It includes an assessment of the affordable housing needs of households spending 30 to 50 percent of their income for housing.

### Executive Summary

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPD) formed a Regional Housing Partnership (RHP) to spearhead a cooperative strategic planning effort to address key issues impacting housing affordability. This housing needs assessment is the first step in the RHP's strategic development effort.

For this analysis, the Planning District's affordable housing needs are defined to include:

- households spending more than 30 percent of their income for housing, particularly those spending more than 50 percent of their income;
- replacement of public housing and Section 8-funded housing that have outlived their useful lives;
- homeless families and individuals and those temporarily doubled up with other friends or family members and at risk of homelessness; and
- substandard units, conservatively estimated based on those that lack complete plumbing fixtures.

Over the past two decades, housing prices in Planning District 10 have increased rapidly as new construction failed to keep pace with the increase in demand at all but the highest rent and price levels. Wages have not kept up with rent increases due to international competition and the stagnant minimum wage. Some of the strongest job growth in the regional economy has taken place in the service sectors (restaurants, retail, hotels and other services) where wages are relatively low and hours are often limited to less than full-time. As demand increased faster than supply, vacancy rates fell and landlords were able to command higher rents from tenants with few other choices. While declining interest rates made mortgages less expensive, the high levels of demand from new and existing residents caused housing prices to rise quickly in step with buyers' ability to qualify for larger mortgages. Rents for older apartments and houses that historically would have been affordable to low-

and moderate-income households rose as they became attractive to higher-income households. This was particularly true in Charlottesville and the urbanized portions of Albemarle County with good access to the University of Virginia (UVA) and other job centers.

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Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia (HOME)

Choice Constrained: Limited Options for Households Utilizing Housing Choice Vouchers

2018

[https://homeofva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Choices-Constrained-2019\\_5\\_14\\_19.pdf](https://homeofva.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Choices-Constrained-2019_5_14_19.pdf)

Analysis

This study importantly documents, through survey work, the reluctance of private landlords to accept housing voucher tenants in the Richmond area. As of the latest HOME survey (est. 2018), only 12% of private (i.e., not Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties that must legally accept vouchers) apartment complexes in the Richmond metro region accepted housing choice vouchers. (NB: 75% of households utilizing vouchers must be classified as “extremely low income” meaning that their income cannot exceed 30% of the local area median income.)

Summary

The Housing Choice Voucher Program is the nation’s largest rental assistance program helping more than 5 million people in 2.2 million low-income families afford housing in the private market. In Virginia, approximately 113,200 people in 46,300 households use a voucher to afford decent, privately owned housing. Vouchers help 10,500 seniors, 24,600 people with disabilities, and 22,700 families with 49,300 children afford housing across the commonwealth.

In theory, households utilizing vouchers have the choice to decide where to live as the subsidy resides with the household, not the property, as in the Project Based Voucher Program. Unfortunately, however, it remains perfectly legal to deny housing to someone using a voucher. Further, due to continued reliance on antiquated methodologies for calculating regional payment standards that are unable to accurately respond to market variations within a metro region, payment standards often are unable to pay for higher rents in more desirable suburban locations and overpay for marginal housing in central cities.

The cumulative effect of these issues results in a severely constrained rental housing market for lower-income residents which further exacerbates the Richmond region’s segregated housing pattern and serves to perpetuate intergenerational poverty. The implications of residential segregation and systemic discrimination in the region is well documented but includes disparate educational outcomes, food accessibility, and job and wealth generating opportunities.

This report provides an update to research on voucher utilization in the Richmond metro region. In the fall of 2012, HOME contacted 124 apartment complexes in the Richmond metro region and asked if they accepted housing choice vouchers. Just 33 (26.6%) of them replied that they did. Late last year (2019), HOME, using the online apartment search website, Apartments.com, contacted 139 apartment complexes across the region; just 26 (18.75%) accept vouchers. It is noteworthy that 10 of the

apartment complexes that accept vouchers are Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties and must legally accept vouchers. If removed from the count, the number of apartment complexes accepting vouchers declines to just 16, or 12% of the complexes surveyed. Though this survey sample is not inclusive of every apartment complex in the region, it is representative of practices in the private rental market.

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Partnership for housing Affordability of the Richmond Metropolitan Area

Richmond Regional Housing Framework

January 2020

<https://pharva.com/wp-content/uploads/RRHF-Summary.pdf>

## Analysis

For the purposes of this report, “affordable” housing refers to a home, either owned or rented, where the household pays no more than 30% of their gross income on basic housing costs. Any household paying more than the 30% threshold is cost-burdened. The report outlines five goals and many additional specific sub goals to achieving affordable housing and attendant benefits in the region. It is very fresh, very comprehensive.

## Summary of Goals

Goal 1: Increase the Supply of Affordable Rental Housing in the Region:

- Increase the amount of land available for multifamily housing development in commercial and residential zones, especially in “communities of opportunity.”
- Preserve naturally occurring affordable housing through proactive outreach to owners and incentives to retain affordability.
- Extend affordability terms for assisted rental developments with expiring subsidies or use restrictions by incentivizing preservation
- Reduce barriers to accessory dwelling units in residential districts.

Goal 2: Support Racially Inclusive Wealth Creation by Increasing Homeownership Opportunities for Low and Moderate Income Households:

- Support and expand the community land trust homeownership model.
- Create a regional center for homeownership that is a one-stop resource hub.
- Build a region-wide, racially equitable homeownership program.
- Reduce land cost per home by encouraging higher density homeownership, including smaller, innovative home types.

Goal 3: Ensure that our Growing Senior Population is Safely and Affordably Housed.

- Promote and expand existing senior tax relief programs for homeowners.
- Increase housing rehab, home accessibility and critical home repair assistance programs.
- Produce more age restricted housing that serves very low-income seniors.

## Southwest

People, Inc  
Community Needs Assessment, Southwest Virginia 2020

(NB: Link is for 2018 report, 2020 report is not yet available on line, although the 2018 analysis appears to be current)

<http://www.peopleinc.net/media/About/Publications/Publications-2018%20Southwest%20Virginia-Community%20Needs%20Assessment.pdf>

### Analysis

Like the previous report by People, Inc, this is a survey- and focus group-based needs assessment for Buchanan County, Dickenson County, Russell County, Washington County, and Bristol City. It identified affordable housing as one of the top three needs for the region and called attention to those who are housing-cost burdened, e.g., those that pay more than 30% of their household income for housing.

### Report Excerpts

Affordable housing was identified as one of three top needs for this region. Over half of renters in the region are housing-cost burdened, meaning that they spend more than 30% of their household income on housing. While more populated areas in the region may have an adequate supply of affordable housing, rural communities have few options, and those available are often of low quality. This problem is complicated by long wait lists and a lack of community resources for those that are without reliable transportation or public alternatives.

During focus groups, current clients discussed the need for more affordable rental housing. While Bristol and Washington County have a good stock of rental housing, options in the rural areas of the region are much more limited. In every county in the region, renter occupied units tend to be older than owner occupied units.<sup>19</sup> This means that renters, who are often lower income, are more likely to face issues that come with old houses, like inadequate weatherization or electrical and plumbing that are not up to current code. Low-income renters often also have fewer options in their price range, and those that are affordable may be low-quality or even unsafe.

According to a recent report from Housing Virginia, the large amount of manufactured housing is a major housing quality issue in the rural, mountainous region of Southwest Virginia. In People Incorporated's Southwest Virginia region, 19.8% of occupied housing units are mobile homes, compared to only 10.3% across all rural regions of Virginia. Additionally, 21% of manufactured homes in Appalachian Virginia (which includes SWVA) were built before HUD introduced manufactured housing quality standards in 1976. According to Housing Virginia, "these homes are far less durable, structurally sound, and energy efficient than their modern counterparts." Owning a manufactured home also builds less equity for the owners.<sup>22</sup>

Twenty-six percent of survey respondents in the SWVA region affirmed that they had chosen between paying for housing and paying for other basic needs in the past year. When housing costs are too high, families must make the difficult choice of which needs are most important and what needs won't be met that month. A 2017 report to the Virginia Housing Policy Advisory Council found that Virginia has a shortage of affordable housing, and this has major implications for state policy priorities like workforce development, transportation, education, and health.

Over 1/4 of households in the Southwest Virginia region are housing cost burdened. However, about 50% of renters are housing cost burdened. For families living below, or even a little above, the poverty threshold, housing comprises a much larger proportion of monthly income.

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## **HAMPTON ROADS**

Prepared by Lisa Sturtevant, Center For Housing Policy and National Housing Conference for Housing Virginia  
[Housing the Future Workforce in the Hampton Roads Region](#)  
May 2014

<https://jamescitycountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/13601/Housing-the-Future-Workforce-in-the-Hampton-Roads-Region-PDF?bidId=>

### **Analysis**

This report documents well the expected changes in employment and housing demand in the Hampton Road area. While it does not use the 50% of AMI benchmark in the study, the author is at times very specific with regard to the situation facing low-income households, and generally uses burdensome housing costs as a merit for understanding the situation facing low income households:

Affordability has become an increasing challenge in Hampton Roads. In the city of Virginia Beach, 39.8 percent of renters spent more than 30 percent of their income on rent in 2000. By 2012, the share had increased to 55.2 percent. Similar increases can be seen across the region. The lowest income households in the region have been disproportionately hard hit by rising rents and stagnant wage growth. Between 2010 and 2012, nearly 90 percent of the region's renters with household incomes below \$20,000 spend more than 30 percent of the income on rent. . . about a quarter of the region's homeowners spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs.

### **Executive Summary Highlights**

This study analyzes the employment-driven demand for housing in the Hampton Roads region between 2013 and 2033 and presents estimates of future housing demand by location, tenure, type and price/rent. These forecasts represent a low estimate of the total housing demand in the region since they exclude estimates of the housing needed for self-employed workers, some part-time workers, replacement workers and individuals not in the labor force (e.g. seniors, persons with disabilities).

- Between 2013 and 2033—Hampton Roads is expected to add 124,356 net new payroll jobs, with job growth shifting from relatively higher-wage government sector to lower-wage sectors, including construction, health services, and administrative and waste services.
- Similarly, the types of housing units suggested by these employment-driven forecasts indicate a growing need for smaller housing units and more townhouses and multi-family housing. About 60 percent of the housing needed over the next 20 years is forecasted to be single-family detached housing, while 40 percent is townhouse or multi-family housing.
- There will be a substantial need for rental housing that is affordable to households earning less than \$50,000. Nearly three quarters of the rental units that will be needed by new workers will need to have monthly rents below \$1,250 in order for them to be affordable. On the homeownership side, more than 45 percent of the ownership units will need to be priced below \$200,000 to be affordable to the future workforce.

Several policy implications follow from these housing demand forecasts:

- Multi-family housing, rental housing and housing affordable to low- and moderate-income workers will be in demand. The housing demand forecasts suggest that the housing that will be needed for the future workforce will include more townhouse and multi-family units, and will need to include a substantial share of units at moderate prices and rents. As a result, there is a need for local jurisdictions to re-examine land use and zoning policies, conduct an inventory of and preserve existing market rate affordable housing, and develop priorities for public funding of affordable housing.
- Without sufficient housing, traffic congestion and quality of life worsen, and the region's full economic development potential may go unrealized. A lack of sufficient housing within the Hampton Roads region, located in proximity to the region's employment centers and to existing and planned transit, will lead to increased traffic congestion, and will result in longer commutes, less worker productivity, and declining quality of life for all residents of the region. Funding for transportation projects is limited, but planning for housing near existing transportation infrastructure and near job growth can achieve the goal of efficiently linking workers to jobs. If there is an insufficient supply of housing affordable to workers, businesses will have a hard time retaining and attracting workers, and overall economic growth may suffer.

## Analysis

Through a series of excellent slide visuals, Norfolk has highlighted the shortage of affordable rental units available to households in the 30, 50 60, and 80 percent of AMI categories, with the greatest gap (of roughly 15,000 units) experienced for households at the 30 and 50 percent of AMI level (this despite a relatively large and diverse array of affordable housing units in general in the City). It also notes that homeowners at the similar AMI levels are not experiencing housing shortfalls.

Summary Recommendations (see report for more specifics on each recommendation)

- Public housing in Norfolk is obsolete and located overwhelmingly in high poverty areas. The colocation and obsolesces of public housing developments contributes to the concentration of poverty. Redevelopment can begin to address this while preserving affordable housing.
- Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) can fill a gap in Norfolk's market rate housing. LIHTC can help to meet the shortage of housing affordable to households earning less than \$42,000. The profile of LIHTC housing is similar in terms of size, construction and location to market rate housing.
- Naturally affordable market rate housing units are fairly well distributed geographically throughout Norfolk. However, the number of units is insufficient for Norfolk's population and the stock of housing is near old.

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The Virginia Center for housing Research at Virginia Tech (VCHR) and CZB, LLC  
Virginia Beach Housing Needs Assessment, Market Analysis, and Re-Investment Study  
2016

[https://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/housing-neighborhood-preservation/Documents/20170519-VB\\_Housing\\_Needs\\_Assessment\\_Market\\_Analysis\\_2005.pdf](https://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/housing-neighborhood-preservation/Documents/20170519-VB_Housing_Needs_Assessment_Market_Analysis_2005.pdf)

## Analysis

This report looks at a range of issues effecting the housing needs of Virginia Beach, and includes sections on the problems and possibly solutions to the City's affordable housing problem. It calls for the City of Virginia Beach to complement developer/builder incentives for infill and redevelopment by providing incentives for owners to upgrade single-family units, with a special emphasis on units affordable to households with incomes between 60-120% Area Median Income (AMI). It also notes that Virginia Beach may need to provide gap financing for low-to-moderate-income multifamily rental housing development and rehabilitation, with a special emphasis on units priced for households with incomes between 30-80% AMI. It calls, inter alia, for the creation of a City of Virginia Beach Land Bank, Community Land Trust, and Housing Trust Fund.

## Report Extracts

The number of households that struggle to afford housing along with other necessities is growing faster than the number of households overall, and larger shares of both owners and renters are cost burdened compared to 2000. As of 2014, more than one-third of households in Virginia Beach, approximately 61,420, were “cost burdened”. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established the term “cost burdened” to describe households that need more affordable housing. HUD defines cost-burdened households as “families who pay more than 30% of their income for housing... and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.”

To preserve its historically stable but now softening housing market, Virginia Beach is going to have to confront a range of formidable challenges:

- Triggering the conversion of stocks that are increasingly obsolete (and thus hard to market) into more appealing homes with more desirable neighborhood settings and amenities.  
City of Virginia Beach Housing Needs Study, Market Analysis and Re-investment Study
- Using policy to shift development away from a, single-use, suburban, greenfield, leapfrog approach to planning and development and more towards a mixed-use, transit-oriented, urban pattern by virtue of redevelopment within existing city boundaries and along key transportation corridors.
- Establishing policies to ensure that the production of market-rate multifamily rental housing occurs in step with future demand, addressing affordability challenges for the city’s growing share of low-wage workers.
- Creatively preserving housing stocks that are currently affordable, while tackling the problem of declining demand and concentrated distress (see section 3.2 for further discussion of demand trends).

Putting together a set of strategically linked responses to the nuanced housing challenges requires a combination of four discrete but connected actions:

- Encouraging upgrades by current owners, including both homeowners and investors
- Encouraging the redevelopment of obsolete housing
- Encouraging multifamily developers to redevelop clusters of property at key locations, transforming moderate volumes of obsolete single-family and town homes into higher-density, mixed-income multifamily rentals.
- Providing intensive assistance to financially strapped or elderly owners to achieve code compliance, combined with equally intensive code enforcement for repeat violators.

## **JAMES CITY COUNTY**

The Workforce Housing Task Force for James city county evaluated data, programs and efforts that affect affordable and workforce housing within James city County; assessed strategies and best practices and initiatives to address the affordable and workforce housing needs; and made recommendations to the Board of Supervisors in February, 2019 on strategies to address affordable and workforce housing challenges.

<https://www.jamescitycountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/21386/Workforce-Housing-Task-Force-Report-Findings--Recommendations-PDF?bidId=>

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## **West Central**

People, Inc

Community Needs Assessment, Northern Shenandoah Valley 2018

<http://www.peopleinc.net/media/About/Publications/Publications-2018%20Northern%20Shenandoah%20Valley-Community%20Needs%20Assessment.pdf>

### **Analysis**

This survey- and focus group-based needs assessment for Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren Counties addresses affordable housing as one of three primary foci. Housing was the top individual and community needs listed in this survey. It notes that almost 1/3 of households in this region spend more than 30% of their household income on housing, and discusses the impact of this on health and children's education. It does not suggest solutions.

### **Executive Summary Excerpts**

People Incorporated is a Community Action Agency serving 13 counties and 3 cities in Virginia. As part of its mandate, and in order to provide the best and most comprehensive anti-poverty services, the agency undertakes a major triennial Community Needs Assessment. . . Drawing from a wide variety of data sources including surveys, focus groups, and public data, the board of People Incorporated identified [Affordable Housing as one of the] top needs for 2018 in the Northern Shenandoah Valley:

Affordable Housing – As housing costs continue to rise in the Washington DC metro area, families are beginning to relocate to the NSV region, placing greater demands on the housing market. Every stakeholder group surveyed overwhelmingly identified housing as the single greatest need in their community. Focus group participants noted that existing affordable housing is low quality.

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Housing Virginia and VCU Center for Urban and Regional Analysis

NB: No website link available.

## **Analysis**

This is a comprehensive study of housing needs, challenges, and solutions for the Northern Shenandoah Valley region. It draws attention to the housing problems facing in particular low income renters:

Among renters, [while] units affordable at the highest and lowest income levels are outpaced by the number of households in those income categories, the region has a surplus of units affordable to households earning between 31 and 80 percent AMI. The current housing market is likely to push the lowest income homebuyers into housing that may not be affordable or back towards the rental market. Low to moderate income renters may also have difficulty finding affordable units as higher income renters place downward pressure on the rental inventory.

Its recommendations include many ideas to increase affordable housing, and, although they are not specifically to the 50% of AMI we are focused on, the recommendations would tend to benefit this group in particular, as well as the homeless. A summary of the recommendations in these two areas follows the Executive Summary below.

## **Executive Summary and Select Recommendations**

The Northern Shenandoah Valley region---the counties of Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, and Warren and the City of Winchester---represents many of the post-recession dynamics visible in communities nationwide. Unemployment has declined dramatically from its 2010 peak of 8.21 percent, and housing starts---the number of new residential buildings under construction---are up. The region's population is growing in urban and suburban population centers, and new jobs have been created through attraction of large public and private employers such as Amazon, FEMA, and the FBI. However, the recession's impacts on the region's housing market continues to echo. New residential building permits have yet to return to pre-recession levels, and as social and economic growth increase demand for housing, the need for a variety of housing options---in cost, size, and density---has taken on added importance. Simultaneously, some of the region's rural communities that haven't shared in the economic and population recovery must plan for the housing and service needs of aging households.

The Northern Shenandoah Regional Commission (NSVRC) has contracted with Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA) and Housing Virginia to explore these trends and what they mean for the region's housing needs---now and in the future. Researchers analyzed and identified current gaps in housing affordability, modeled population growth through 2040 to identify future housing needs, and mapped out strategies for each of the region's six jurisdictions to continue meeting the needs of residents.

## Recommendations --Strategies to Promote Abundant, High-Quality Rental Homes

- Find strong, reliable development partners.
- Take advantage of available funding resources, including VHDA, USDA-RD, DHCD, Virginia Community Capital and others can make high quality development possible.
- Monitor and preserve existing affordable rental stock.
- Ensure that adequate land is available for the development of new rental housing units.
- Explore the designation of a historic district, as Historic Tax Credits are a key tool in affordable rental housing development.
- Consider a voluntary inclusionary zoning ordinance to create a variety of housing types and price points. Several counties and cities in Virginia have chosen to implement inclusionary zoning policies (of which there are a variety) in order to increase the range of housing types and price points newly constructed in their communities. Inclusionary zoning policies use either mandatory or voluntary zoning requirements to create below-market housing units in new construction rental or ownership projects. Due to Virginia state law, the NSVRC jurisdictions are not currently eligible to implement mandatory inclusionary zoning, but instead can create conditional inclusionary zoning programs only applicable when a developer seeks a variance or special exemption for development.
- Consider the adoption of an accessory dwelling unit ordinance. These ADU ordinances allow for the addition of a living unit to an owner-occupied unit. ADUs can help seniors to age in place successfully or can enable them to co-locate with a child or other relative while still maintaining independence.
- Support the development of new housing credit rental housing through VHDA that can provide good housing for new households below 80 percent AMI. A change in the program last year allows the LIHTC program to serve some higher income households as long as that is balanced by serving lower income as well. The result is a greater mix of incomes that creates a better environment for all.

## Recommendations - Strategies to Reduce Homelessness and Housing Instability

- Use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to support local housing nonprofits and housing initiatives. A portion of the state's CDBG funds are competitively awarded to localities for use in affordable housing projects via the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The state supports a wide array of housing strategies through these funds, including homelessness reduction efforts.
- If additional PSH funds are available through the DBHDS, the NWCSB should apply for them.
- The NWCSB is interested in providing additional PSH but does not have the resources on their own. In addition to resources from the DBHDD, the NWCSB would be amenable to partnering with a nonprofit developer to create new PSH units in their service area.
- Prioritize homeless persons with serious mental illness and/or co-occurring substance use disorders for Vouchers. The two HCV programs covering the region should prioritize these populations because they are the most vulnerable population. The programs should work with the Virginia Department of Veterans Services to apply for VASH vouchers for the region.

- Address the use of motels used as de facto affordable and transitional housing. The region, Winchester and Frederick County in particular, currently relies on a private-market network of decrepit extended-stay motels used as transitional affordable housing. This housing is expensive (between \$250 and \$350 per week) and substandard, lacking basic amenities and safe conditions. Jurisdictions should work with motel owners and the non-profit community to develop alternatives to this housing for the very low income and those on the verge of homelessness.