
RAPPAHANNOCK-RAPIDAN REGIONAL COMMISSION
REGIONAL HOUSING STUDY



STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

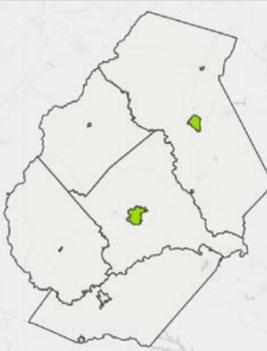
CAVEATS TO STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

- Housing is continuing to be built throughout the region. While some of these are geared toward lower incomes, seniors, and first-time home buyers, many are market-rate housing that is largely unaffordable to those who work in the region. These strategies, then, focus on preserving and creating housing for those who need it, largely: cost-burdened households, those who work in the region, and household demand generated by short-term population growth.
- There is an underlying issue to housing affordability that cannot be easily addressed in this Regional Housing Study. Simply put, average wages earned within the region are not enough to afford a median-priced home. The wage rate is impacted by several things including but not limited to industry type (specifically increasing service and hospitality sector jobs), globalization, state laws and minimum wages, and overall economic climate. Stagnating wages and rising housing costs are the main reasons for the nation-wide housing crisis. While this study does not provide input into how to address wage issues, we do recommend those implementing these strategies be supportive of actions that increase the purchasing power of the region's constituents.
- The economic impacts of COVID-19 threaten to displace those who cannot afford rent or mortgage payments due to pandemic related effects. These strategies do not directly address this ever-evolving issue, but it is recommended that localities proactively understand potential displacement of those unable to pay rent or mortgage and work to help them remain in their homes as a priority issue.
- Coordination will be key to implementing these strategies and we recommend a regional point person. Some of this is addressed in Goal 2, *Address Perceptions on Growth and Attainable Housing* but additional oversight will be needed to maintain traction, connect resources, and provide the capacity to those localities in need.

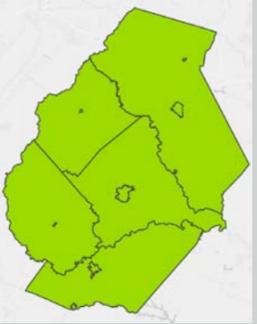
STRATEGIC THEMES

- 1. Increase and Preserve the Supply of Attainable Housing** | Lack of housing in the region causes stagnation and prevention of a natural turnover within the housing market. It reduces the ability for seniors to move into a home with lower maintenance and prevents first time home buyers from acquiring a home. It also prevents those who work in the region from also living here. Rentals are consistently challenging to find at attainable rates, and even more so for the homeless population. Goal 4, Examine and Adapt Existing Land Use Protocols, addresses this within a more regulatory framework.
- 2. Address Perceptions of Growth and Attainable Housing** | Some localities revealed that housing development is a “hot button” political issue in their communities. This stems in part from a perception that certain types of housing, particularly that which meets the needs of lower-income households, are undesirable in their community. Understanding why a range of housing types is necessary throughout the region to allow for community vitality, workforce readiness, economic mobility, and industry attraction, will be important moving forward. Growth can be limited to both preserve the character of a community and also encouraged to meet the housing needs of its constituents.
- 3. Address Maintenance Needs and Alleviate Substandard Housing Stock** | Both rentals and owned homes were cited as having issues regarding maintenance, from exterior cosmetic issues impacting curb appeal to functional issues compromising safety. Some of the housing in need of repair is located in town centers, but most were identified as being in more rural parts of the region. The extent to which this portion of the housing stock can be updated will preserve a segment of the supply for current and future utilization.
- 4. Examine and Adapt Existing Land Use Protocols** | How land is currently being used has created some issues that restrict the housing market to develop to its full potential. A significant proportion of the land in the region is prohibited from development via environmental easements or national park designations. Minimum required large lot sizes also hinder growth. While exploring changing these uses will likely not result in increasing the supply of land, efforts can be made to explore expanding designated growth areas, zoning around infill development, annexing additional areas into sewer and water districts, etc. These intentions can be addressed in localities’ forthcoming updates to their comprehensive plans with preference to their approach.

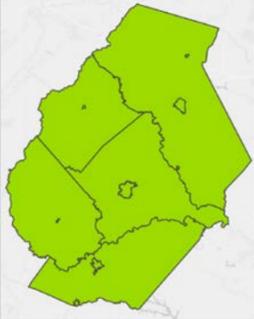
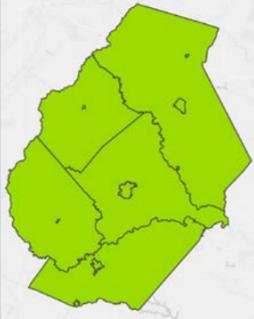
I. INCREASE AND PRESERVE THE SUPPLY OF ATTAINABLE HOUSING

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	TARGET LOCALITIES
1.1.Preserve current attainable units.	1.1.1.Enact a regional “Right of First Refusal” policy to ensure a qualified nonprofit developer, a government agency, or the development’s tenant association can purchase a multifamily rental housing property currently if and when the owner decides to sell the property.	Property Owners & Managers Local Realtors Virginia Housing (formerly VHDA)	Short Term (1-3 Years)	
	1.1.2.Create an inventory of affordable multifamily rentals that can be used to track and prevent the loss of these properties.			
1.2.Encourage more senior housing.	1.2.1.Encourage universal design principals in all new construction so it can be habitable to everyone, including seniors.	Area Housing Nonprofits Senior Service Organizations Developers PATH Foundation	Mid Term (3-5 Years)	
	1.2.2.Establish a “Golden Girls” cohousing program where seniors rent out rooms to other seniors.			
	1.2.3.Consider tax credits to developers of senior living facilities, in particular models supported by the individual locality.			
1.3.Increase the number of attainable units throughout the region.	1.3.1.Inventory abandoned or underused buildings that can be repurposed for attainable housing. Investigate acquisition by local municipal agencies to eventually transfer to a rental developer, lowering the cost of entry.	Fauquier County Habitat for Humanity Skyline Community Action Partnership People Incorporated Local Realtors Virginia Community Development Corporation (VCDC) Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Virginia Housing	Long Term (5+ Years)	
	1.3.2.Establish Incentive Housing Zones (IHZ) that offer exceptions to regulations that restrict higher-density, mixed-use developments. Developers build high capacity and/or mixed-use developments in the IHZ on the condition that they provide a public improvement in the development i.e., public recreation space, sidewalks, streetscaping, etc.			
	1.3.3.Allow current owner-occupied single-family homes to convert their home to a duplex, triplex, or fourplex in certain single-family zoned areas.			
	1.3.4.Consider allowing Single Room Occupancy and Rooming House land use designations and removing restrictions that set firm maximum occupancy and parking requirements.			
	1.3.5 Work to create a community land trust to decrease the cost of home ownership and keep units in perpetual affordability.			

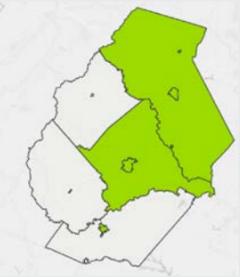
2. ADDRESS PERCEPTIONS OF GROWTH AND ATTAINABLE HOUSING

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	TARGET LOCALITIES
<p>2.1. Create a marketing program/communications plan to address housing perceptions.</p>	<p>2.1.1. Create a short video that highlights the housing issue in the region and why a diversity of housing is needed for a vibrant and sustainable community. Replicate this video in presentation form for internet distribution and present to various town and county boards, service providers, and community groups that may be potential adversaries of attainable and/or multifamily developments. Tailor each presentation with clear action steps for the group presented to.</p>	<p>Local Media Outlets RRRC Developers Virginia Housing Community Outreach</p>	<p>Short Term (1-3 Years)</p>	
	<p>2.1.2 Highlight completed multifamily projects and how they are working to address housing issues. Publish in local newspapers, online, locality and service-based newsletters, etc.</p>			
	<p>2.1.3. Create a landing page on the RRRC website that houses information compiled in action 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.</p>			
<p>2.2. To ensure this strategy is marketed well throughout the region, create or appoint a regional spokesperson or advocacy group.</p>	<p>2.2.1. Implement actions outlined in 2.1.</p>	<p>Local Media Outlets RRRC Area Nonprofits & Service Organizations Surrounding Localities</p>	<p>Short Term (1-3 Years)</p>	
	<p>2.2.2. Convene housing advocates, public officials, and other housing stakeholders to communicate needs, clarify town and county boards' roles, and facilitate discussions between housing stakeholders.</p>			
	<p>2.2.3. Talk to developers regularly regarding pipeline projects, barriers to development, and to clarify what type of development is being prioritized throughout the region (as seen in locality comprehensive plans).</p>			

3. ADDRESS MAINTENANCE NEEDS AND ALLEVIATE SUBSTANDARD HOUSING STOCK

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	TARGET LOCALITIES
3.1. Assist existing efforts to alleviate maintenance issues.	3.1.1. Inventory existing efforts throughout the region and establish a central clearinghouse of information.	Fauquier County Habitat for Humanity Foothills Housing Corporation Skyline Community Action Partnership People Incorporated Other Property Management Companies Other Area Nonprofits & Service Organizations	Short Term (1-3 Years)	
	3.1.2. Promote these programs in line with action 2.2.			
	3.1.3 Encourage collaboration among service providers. Look for work that can be passed through/between organizations and identify if funding may be available.			
3.2. Identify housing not up to code, and work cooperatively with owners to bring properties into compliance.	3.2.1. Conduct windshield surveys, rely on resident input, or conduct more formal inspections.	Fauquier County Habitat for Humanity Foothills Housing Corporation Skyline Community Action Partnership People Incorporated Other Area Nonprofits & Service Organizations	Mid Term (3-5 Years)	
	3.2.2. Rather than make this process punitive, provide resources to the owner and educate them about healthy housing.			
	3.2.3. Educate renters about their rights regarding substandard housing or maintenance needs.			
3.3. Identify additional innovative methods to address substandard housing stock.	3.3.1. Contact major employers, fraternal clubs, service organizations, etc. and link with community members identified in 3.2. Highlight activities as seen in action 2.1.2.	Major Employers Fauquier County Habitat for Humanity Foothills Housing Corporation Skyline Community Action Partnership People Incorporated Other Area Nonprofits & Service Organizations USDA Rural Development	Long Term (5+ Years)	
	3.3.2. Investigate resources for energy efficiency programs.			
	3.3.3. If a house is beyond repair, enact a program to relocate tenants and demolish and remove the structure from the housing stock.			
	3.3.4. Expand Utilization of USDA-RD 504 Rehabilitation Program, which provides resources for housing rehab in rural communities.			

4. EXAMINE AND ADAPT EXISTING LAND USE PROTOCOLS

STRATEGY	ACTION	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	TARGET LOCALITIES
4.1.Examine existing land use protocols.	4.1.1.Conduct a community engagement protocol/visioning charrette to understand community needs around housing and gather input regarding what types of denser housing would be accepted.	Surrounding Localities Virginia Housing Planning Consultant	Short Term (1-3 Years)	
	4.1.2.Consider strategizing with housing advocacy group/spokesperson for community outreach (action 2.2).			
	4.1.3.Create a values/vision statement to drive future land use updates.			
4.2.Update or create a housing chapter in comprehensive plans to accommodate new vision.	4.2.1.Citing findings from this report and input received via community engagement, outline methods for modifying land use protocols to address housing needs.	Surrounding Localities Virginia Housing Planning Consultant	Short Term (1-3 Years)	
	4.2.2.Create a housing chapter that aligns with the particular needs of the locality in question. Consider elements from strategy 4.4.			
	4.2.3.Ensure chapter has language to advocate – however generally – that a diverse stock of housing is important in economic development and community vitality.			
4.3.Align zoning with a comprehensive plan update.	4.3.1.Appoint a task force to direct implementation efforts outlined in the housing chapter.	Surrounding Localities Virginia Housing	Mid Term (3-5 Years)	
	4.3.2.Where overlap exists between multiple localities, consider combining resources to create efficiencies.			
	4.3.3.Celebrate successes and further community education by highlighting and promoting the implementation of elements of the housing chapter.			
4.4.Consider additional housing policies/practices for facilitating attainable housing.	4.4.1.Allow combined meters for multifamily units thus reducing tap fees.	Surrounding Localities Virginia Housing	Long Term (5+ Years)	
	4.4.2.Where buildable land is at a minimum, explore annexing for multifamily and/or age restrictive housing.			
	4.4.3.Modify Urban Development Areas (UDAs) and/or service districts to accommodate additional housing development.			
	4.4.4.Conduct an audit of build processes to ensure they are meeting the needs of developers and are easy to use.			
	4.4.5.Allow auxiliary dwelling units (ADUs) in all residentially zoned land.			
	4.4.6.Evaluate land zoned commercial and industrial for the potential to convert to mixed-use or high-density residential.			
	4.4.7.As appropriate, explore potential housing solutions for educational purposes, like form-based coding.			