

2025 Priorities List for Housing Commission to Consider (not in any particular order)

1. PLACEHOLDER FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING ORDINANCE WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATION
2. Expand localities' negotiation authority with developers for site-plan conditions to include habitability conditions, neighborhood equity projects, bedroom size, and Type A accessibility for market rate units.
 - The Housing Commission would recommend expanded negotiation authority for local governments, like Arlington County, to use the site-plan process to address community needs beyond areas like transit facilities, roads, affordable housing, or onsite green or community space. This new authority would allow local governments to negotiate commitments regarding certain habitability and quality conditions for tenants, funds for addressing the impacts of historic segregation in the local neighborhood (local projects to address disparate access in opportunity to employment, environmentally healthy neighborhoods, education, etc.), unit bedroom sizes based on needs within the community for certain family-size units, or additional Type A accessible units.
3. 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, HB597, HB1718) patroned legislation aligned with this legislative priority in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 the bills were vetoed after being passed by the Virginia House and Senate.
4. Enhance anti-retaliation protections for tenants who form a tenant association, seek to enforce their rights under the Fair Housing Law, VRLTA, and Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code, or raise grievances to their property manager or landlord.
 - The Housing Commission has heard directly from tenants, especially low-income tenants, that they have hesitated to or not reported violations of their rights as tenants because they fear retaliation. Additionally, the Regional Fair Housing Plan adopted by the County Board in July 2023 notes that that Spanish-speaking residents reported "fear of reprisal as a major issue in reporting housing discrimination or substandard housing conditions." This is a problem affecting tenants across the county across income levels and current law places the burden of proving a landlord's intent to retaliate on the tenant.
 - In 2022, Delegate Lopez patroned HB840 which would presume that a landlord is retaliating against a tenant if they increase their rent or evict them within 6 months after the tenant brings up complaints. The bill failed to advance in the General Assembly. In 2024, Delegate McClure patroned HB817 to modify and expand the list of actions a landlord may take without violating the prohibition on retaliation and allow a tenant, when the landlord has unlawfully retaliated, to recover actual damages and to assert retaliation as a defense in any action

brought against him for possession. The bill passed the House and Senate but was vetoed by the Governor.

5. Allocate more resources toward enforcing fair housing laws to prevent discrimination
 - The federal government has stopped or sharply curtailed enforcement of federal fair housing cases based on sexual orientation and gender identity and the Trump Administration has announced plans to reduce fair housing staff within the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by almost 80% which means that all federal fair housing investigations may become extremely backed up. The Housing Commission recommends that Virginia's Fair Housing Office be allocated more resources to conduct housing discrimination investigations and ensure the state has sufficient resources to enforce fair housing law.
6. Fund a pilot state housing voucher program
 - In 2023, Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development developed the [Virginia Housing Stability Fund](#) (now known as the 5,000 Families Fund) proposal to create a state-wide rental assistance program. However, the General Assembly did not take action on the proposal that session. In 2024, Delegate Sewell patroned HB 1879 and Senator Locke patroned SB832 (5,000 Families Fund) to establish a state-wide rental assistance pilot program. The bills did not pass the House of Delegates or Senate.
 - Joe V. recommends: Virginia faces an urgent challenge: families must navigate overlapping eligibility systems for housing, Medicaid, SNAP, and WIC, often submitting the same documents multiple times across siloed agencies. This results in delayed access to critical services, administrative backlogs, and unnecessary costs. The Commonwealth currently spends an estimated **\$500 million annually** verifying eligibility—with over **\$290 per person** going toward duplicative processes that frustrate both residents and staff. With the General Assembly actively considering funding a **state housing voucher program**, now is the right moment to test a model that not only expands access, but does so efficiently, equitably, and in a way that supports broader benefit coordination. A pilot in Arlington County would allow Virginia to demonstrate what an integrated, mobile-first intake system could achieve. Residents would be able to submit information once and have it applied across programs. Caseworkers could focus on service—not paperwork. Real-time data integrations would support fraud detection, eligibility flagging, and faster lease-ups. In Connecticut, a similar pilot projected **\$7.17 million in annual cost savings**, which would translate to over **\$17 million annually** in a state the size of Virginia. This is a solvable problem—and the infrastructure to solve it already exists. **Matrix Rental Solutions has a proven track record implementing this system in partnership with public agencies and is ready to support a demonstration in Arlington that Virginia can scale statewide.**
7. Faith in Housing for the Commonwealth Act
 - 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.

8. Developmental and use of accessory dwelling units (HB 900 / SB 304)

- Requires a locality to include in its zoning ordinances for residential zoning districts accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, as defined in the bill, as a permitted accessory use.
- The bill requires a person to seek a permit for an ADU from the locality, requires the locality to issue such permit if the person meets certain requirements enumerated in the bill, and restricts the fee for such permit to \$250 or less. The bill prohibits the locality from requiring rear or side setbacks for the ADU greater than that of the primary dwelling or consanguinity or affinity between the occupants of the ADU and the primary dwelling. The bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2025.
- Potential wording: Inform VML, VACO and the state that Arlington does not take issue with state legislature enabling more streamlined construction of accessory dwellings or granny flats so that homeowners can provide housing to family members and other people in need of housing.

9. Increased funding for the VA affordable housing trust fund (has been included in the past already)

- 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.

10. Require legal aid office contact information for all lease terminations (currently only applies to public housing/housing choice voucher recipients)

- § 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 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.

11. Require localities to develop streamlined development process for 100% affordable developments

- The Housing Commission recommends that the General Assembly pass legislation mandating that every locality create an approval process for 100% affordable housing developments/redevelopments that significantly decreases the time and expenses associated with gaining local governing body approval for the project and provide whatever authority is required for localities to execute this mandate.