



# TOWN OF FAIRFAX

## STAFF REPORT

### April 15, 2021

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Ben Berto, Director of Planning and Building Services

**SUBJECT:** Summary of ad hoc housing subcommittee

#### BACKGROUND

The Town is in the early stages of work updating its General Plan Housing Element in response to the draft 6<sup>th</sup> cycle of the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) mandated by the State. The Town Council on April 7 authorized hiring a housing consultant. A decision on the final composition of a working group for the Housing Element update is expected at the April 21 joint Town Council / Planning Commission Housing Element workshop.

In anticipation of a Council decision on working group composition, while beginning substantive Commission work on the update, the three Commission members recommended for inclusion in ad hoc Housing Subcommittee met on March 30 to review the current (2015-2023) Housing Element.

#### DISCUSSION

Consistent with promptly reporting out subcommittee work, the following summarizes the subcommittee working group's March 30 meeting, which focused on the seven Goals listed in the Housing Element. The seven Goals are as follows:

**Goal H-1** Housing opportunities for a range of household types and incomes (including extremely low, very low, low, moderate, and above moderate incomes – as well as for homeless families and individuals). When possible, the Town will encourage and assist with projects that include units for extremely low, very low, and low-income households.

**Goal H-2** Housing and programs for special needs populations, including seniors, single parents, and families, as well as workforce housing and emergency homeless shelters.

**Goal H-3** Create transit-oriented housing in the Town Center that is less dependent on automobile travel, thereby minimizing traffic impacts to the greatest extent possible while providing support for transit.

**Goal H-4** Link housing and jobs in the community, include housing opportunities for Fairfax workers and public service employees.

**Goal H-5 Sustainable Affordable Housing.** Well-designed, energy-efficient housing, affordable to and appropriate for a diverse population at compatible scales.

**Goal H-6** Create additional opportunities for the development of second units.

**Goal H-7** Create efficient procedures for monitoring housing need achievements.

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Subcommittee comments relating to those Goals and accompanying Objectives, Policies, and Programs, are as follows:

**Goal H-1** Housing opportunities for a range of household types and incomes (including extremely low, very low, low, moderate, and above moderate incomes – as well as for homeless families and individuals). When possible, the Town will encourage and assist with projects that include units for extremely low, very low, and low-income households.

*Comments:* Ensure affordability for lowest-income populations. Ensure equitability. Adopt an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance. The Town will assist developers of affordable worker, senior, and family housing, providing incentives as may be available for their creation.

**Goal H-2** Housing and programs for special needs populations, including seniors, single parents, and families, as well as workforce housing and emergency homeless shelters. Propose revising as follows:

*Comments:* The related objective speaks to housing opportunities for Town residents with special needs, however as seen with Victory Village the Town may not be able to have realistic goals/policies for efforts limited to or for Town residents. Need to review policies and programs to determine if they are still current, feasible, and result in actual programs that result in change and are reasonable. The Town will adopt policies and adopt land use standards that foster housing development for all sectors of the community and are in conformance with Fairfax Objective Development and Historic Preservation Standards. Adopt a reasonable accommodation policy for persons with disabilities and special needs populations, seeing fair access to housing and the application of zoning laws, policies and processes, including reduced parking requirements for disabled persons housing. There was no action on 'reasonable accommodation requests' the previous or current cycle. Many programs have been adopted by the State and/or are ongoing. We should better integrate the population with disabilities into this goal. We should also address non-emergency homeless issues here.

**Goal H-3** Create transit-oriented housing in the Town Center that is less dependent on automobile travel, thereby minimizing traffic impacts to the greatest extent possible while providing support for transit.

*Comments:* Assess rezoning or stagnant residential and commercial properties in the Highway Commercial zone to create additional small, infill housing and live-work units in existing mixed-use parcels which would further enhance the pedestrian environment. Link

energy efficiency or other incentives to square footage. Consider new Goal H-3 after the proposed merger of existing Goals 3 and 5, as follows: Goal H-3 The Town will adopt land use policies and establish standards that foster housing development for all sectors of the community that are in conformance with its adopted Fairfax Objective Development , Historic Preservation Standards, and Hill Area Residential Standards, to facilitate the entitlement process. The Town will zone appropriate housing opportunity parcels for the development of sufficient housing units to meet the RHNA requirements, within the standards established in Fairfax General Plan, Land Use and Housing Elements, Hill Area Residential, Conservation, Open Space, and Historic Elements. The Town will assess the potential for substandard, vacant and underutilized public properties to provide housing opportunities for local workers, teachers and low income households.

**Goal H-4** Link housing and jobs in the community, include housing opportunities for Fairfax workers and public service employees.

*Comments:* Adopt policies that encourage and incentivize the 50% remodel and new construction of sustainable and energy efficient residential and commercial systems to meet the Town's goal of greenhouse gas emissions and it's reliance on fossil fuels. Further incentivize EV infrastructure with over-the-counter installation of EV chargers for residential and commercial property owners. Consider revising and combining Goal H-3 and H-4 as follows for more cohesive goals and objectives: The Town will encourage and incentivize transit oriented housing in the Town Center area that is less dependent on automobiles, thereby minimizing traffic impacts, linking jobs and housing for Fairfax workers and public service employees. The Town will assess the rezoning of stagnant residential and underused commercial properties in the Commercial Highway zone to create additional small, infill housing and live work units, in existing mixed use parcels which would further result in an enhanced pedestrian environment between the Commercial, Town Center and the Historic Center of Fairfax. The Town will adopt a Zoning Map consistent with it's General Plan.

**Goal H-5** Sustainable Affordable Housing. Well-designed, energy-efficient housing, affordable to and appropriate for a diverse population at compatible scales.

*Comments:* There are number of programs that may not be applicable and are candidates for deletion, for example, create home sharing and tenant matching opportunities is outside the scope of the Town. Propose revision as follows: In order to meet stated climate goals for greenhouse gas reductions; the Town will encourage and incentivize sustainable, well designed and energy-efficient housing affordable to all sectors of the population. Town Council will consider the Climate Action Committee proposed adoption of an electrification ordinance to ban natural gas (appliances?) in new residential construction, after December 2021. The Town could also consider the requirement of solar installations, where feasible, for new residential and commercial construction.

**Goal H-6** Create additional opportunities for the development of second units.

*Comments:* The development of Accessory Dwelling Units (especially) and Junior Accessory Dwelling units, 'Granny Units" has been very successful in Fairfax and throughout the State. Some of this is due to the State relaxing requirements for the development of such units.

Several of the development standards advanced in HE programs have been superseded by the State (for example maximum unit size or floor area ratio limits). ADU's/JADU's are an important component of the Town's development of moderate-income and some low-income units. This program should be enhanced and expanded to create compact, affordable housing opportunities for homeowners, families, and friends. Smaller housing units fit within the footprint of existing development.

**Goal H-7** Create efficient procedures for monitoring housing need achievements.

*Comments:* Existing programs should be evaluated to carefully identify who is responsible for housing achievements. Consider revising as follows: Town Council and Planning Commission shall provide information and opportunities for the community to review specific development proposals and the Annual Housing and Community Development Department Reports by publishing them on the Town website for general access. The Town will encourage developers of proposed residential or commercial structures to provide the opportunity for residents to review the proposal in a community meeting.

**General Housing Element Subcommittee Comments:**

A considerable number of programs may not be realistic or have been superseded by State law or other changes in circumstance that render them obsolete. The focus should be on priorities. Determine whether the entire General Plan needs to be reviewed for consistency with the Housing Element update. Update information on the Town's progress on zoning changes. The Affordable Housing Committee should be considered for responsibility for appropriate programs. Creative ideas should also be considered. The pandemic's impact on housing and jobs, and the relationship between the two, should be considered as part of this update. Consider additional goals.

**SUMMARY**

The ad hoc subcommittee has analyzed the Goals portion of the existing Housing Element, and their comments have been reported above to the Planning Commission. Analysis of the Housing Element is an early task in the Housing Element update. Subcommittee comments will assist subsequent work. The Town Council is scheduled to determine the makeup of the overall subcommittee working group on April 21, and the Housing Element consultant will be available to facilitate future group meetings.

Staff is also including as an attachment the current and proposed RHNA housing numbers.

**ATTACHMENT**

Attachment A: Summary Table from Annual Progress Report

## Current Fairfax RHNA numbers

### ➤ Current RHNA 5<sup>th</sup> cycle allocation (2012-2022)

➤ <u>Allocation</u>		<u>Constructed</u>	<u>Remaining</u>
➤ Extremely low:	8	n/a	(combined)
➤ Very low:	8	13	3 (combined)
➤ Low:	11	63	0
➤ Moderate:	11	4	7
➤ Above Moderate:	23	10	13
➤ <b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>20</b>

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## Proposed Fairfax RHNA numbers

### ➤ Proposed RHNA 6<sup>th</sup> cycle allocation (2015-2023)

➤ Very low:	149
➤ Low:	86
➤ Moderate:	71
➤ Above Moderate:	184
➤ <b>Total</b>	<b>490</b>

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