

Embark Richmond Highway: Recommendations for Affordable Housing Strategy in the Route 1 Corridor

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Introduction

This report analyzes and addresses the need for a greater focus on affordable housing in the Richmond Highway Corridor in relation to the Fairfax County *Comprehensive Plan Amendment 2015-IV-MV1: Embark Richmond Highway*. The study evaluates existing housing conditions along Route 1 and the potential impact of the Embark development, and recommends a greater focus on housing needs, as well as stronger affordable housing strategy.

The Richmond Highway Corridor along Route 1 is envisioned to be a mixed-use, walkable, and transit-oriented community, including the construction of a Bus Rapid Transit system, improved pedestrian infrastructure, a change in street grid and layout, higher-density redevelopment, and an eventual extension of the Metro through the Richmond Highway area. Beyond maintaining current County housing policy, the Embark plan does not offer sufficiently strong policy strategies to retain the existing number of affordable housing units in the Richmond Highway Corridor. It is imperative that the existing stock of affordable housing, both committed and market-rate, not be lost due to rising rents or redevelopment. Housing has not been a major focus of the Embark Richmond Highway plan, yet the mixed-income housing in the corridor is central to the success of the area. This report offers general recommendations on strategies and policies that will preserve and improve the Richmond Highway affordable housing stock.

Existing Housing Conditions

Route 1 as a Center of Affordability

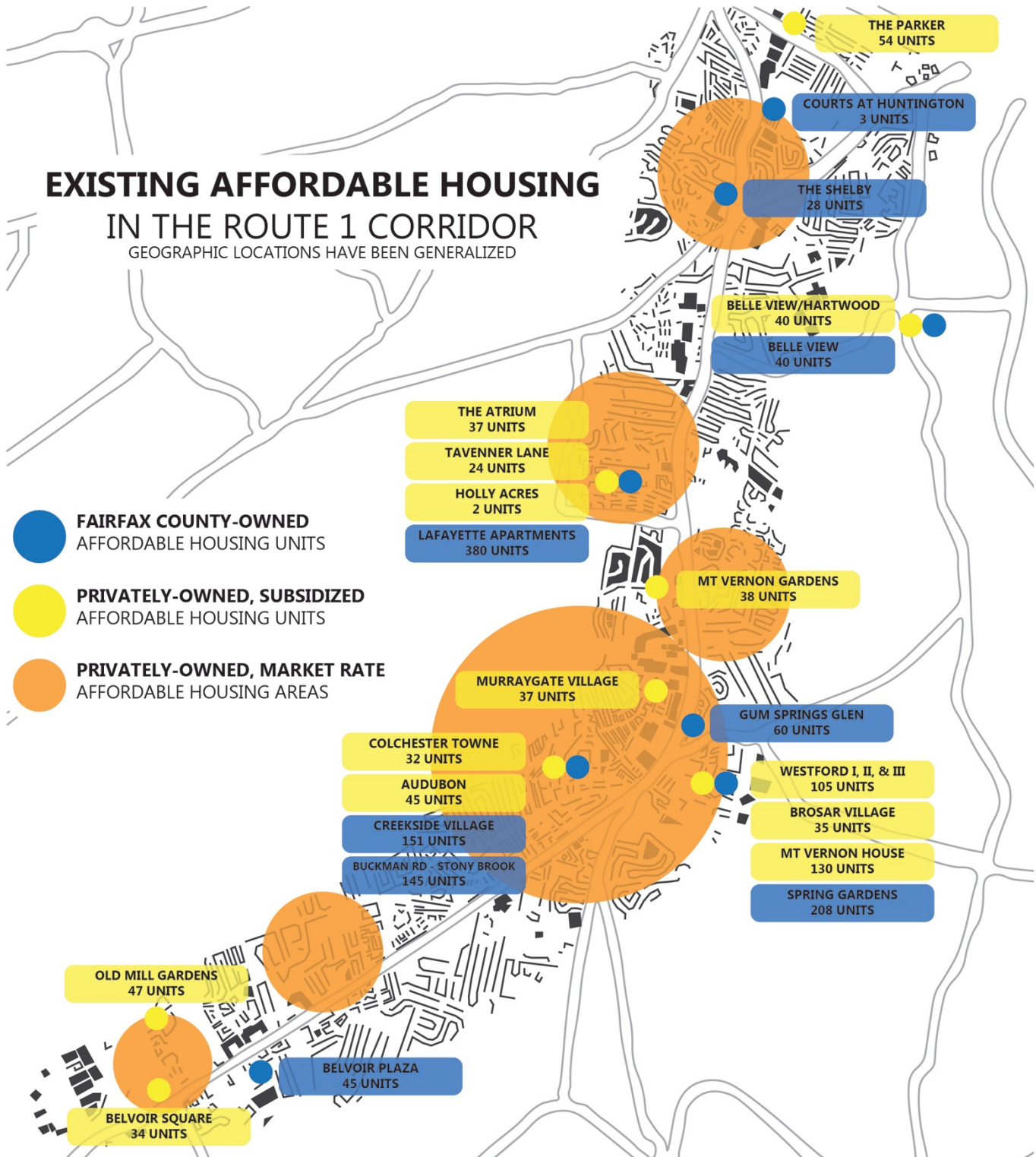
The Richmond Highway Corridor is home to a significant number of low- to moderate-income households. While there is a large stock of committed affordable housing, the older housing units that dominate the corridor have allowed for private rental rates to remain relatively low, providing housing for a large number of low-income families.

The Route 1 Corridor currently hosts a dynamic mix of affordability and housing types, ranging from privately-owned market-rate units to county-owned housing, and from single family homes to garden apartments and mobile homes. Richmond Highway has a large number of County-owned and assisted affordable housing, including 9 public housing facilities, 7 Rental Program properties, 3 County-owned Senior Residences, and 4 Rental Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs), totaling close to 1,000 units.¹ In addition, there are a number of privately-owned

affordable units, including 5 Federally Assisted Rental Units, 10 apartment communities, 4 Low-Income Housing Tax Credit properties, and many privately-owned, market-rate affordable units.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development considers market-rate units affordable when their cost is at or below 120% of the Area Median Income. For Fairfax County, AMI is \$109,200 for a family of four, and a home is affordable at \$3,640.² Privately-owned housing units usually maintain affordability because of the age of the buildings, the condition of the units, or lack of amenities and services. While Fairfax County owns or directly manages just over 400 affordable units along Richmond Highway, there are over 1,200 privately-owned subsidized and program-participating affordable units, plus hundreds of market-rate affordable units. The various types of affordable units are catalogued in Appendix A.

Committed affordable housing, like public housing, county rental properties, ADUs, and WDUs, is distributed along the corridor, and market affordable housing exists in clusters, illustrated in the map below.



Making the Case for Preserving Affordability

The Embark plan will provide new transportation options, transform public spaces and bring about extensive redevelopment of commercial areas into mixed-use neighborhoods. This transformation will likely change housing types and affordability in the corridor, shifting the types of households seeking to live there, and shifting housing needs. While committed affordable units will remain, many affordable units are privately-owned, and have no federal, state, or local funding or restrictions attached to them.

These privately-owned, older housing units are valuable because they provide a significant number of housing options to low and moderate income households without any government subsidies. Redevelopment and revitalization of the area provides opportunities for landlords to either reposition their properties,

selling them to be redeveloped, or increase rents to a rate that is no longer affordable.³

Already, Richmond Highway residents are complaining about landlords of private properties raising rents. During a recent Coalition for Smarter Growth walking tour, a family in Hybla Valley, one of the areas with a high concentration of market affordable housing, expressed that their landlord has been increasing rental rates, and they fear that they and many of their fellow community members may have to leave the area if housing costs continue to rise.

As rents increase and affordable housing is redeveloped, the loss of affordability will leave Richmond Highway unable to maintain the housing needs of a diverse community, nor the workforce the county needs meet job demand.

Recommendations

As the Embark Richmond Highway plan approaches completion, there are important opportunities for Fairfax County to adopt strong policies and strategies that will preserve both committed and market-rate affordable housing. Based on this report, we recommend the following.

1. Conduct an Affordable Housing Impact Assessment.

Well into their study, the Embark Richmond Highway task force only recently engaged the county's Department of Housing and Community Development to present an initial assessment of housing types and affordability. Working with the Department of Housing and Community Development, the task force should ensure they have a complete picture of the existing stock of committed and market-rate affordable housing, as well as the ways that new transit, revitalization, and redevelopment could impact the future of housing affordability in the area. The County should look to existing studies on development's impact on housing, such as the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance's 2011 report *Charting a Way Forward*.⁴

2. Adopt strategies that work to preserve existing market-rate affordable housing.

Fairfax County should focus efforts not only on maintaining the existing stock of subsidized affordable housing, but on preserving the stock of privately-owned affordable units that provide homes to so many families along Route 1. Preservation strategies include

(1) Tax relief agreements tied to maintain affordable rents, using: abatements, partial exemptions, or decreased frequency of assessments that lower taxes and reduce operating costs so landlords can keep rents affordable;

- (2) **Outright Purchase** of existing housing by the County so as to keep units affordable, rather than redeveloped;
- (3) **Subsidies** for market-rate affordable units;
- (4) **Zoning** that incentivizes preservation of market-rate units;
- (5) **Density Bonuses** in return for preservation of units, and;
- (6) Allocation of a share of **tax increment financing** to support a preservation fund.

3. Establish stronger inclusionary zoning policy

The County should adopt inclusionary zoning strategies for the Embark Richmond Highway plan that are stronger than existing County policies. Current policy requires that 12% of new housing units be committed affordable housing. That minimum should be raised to a rate that would reflect future housing needs and accounts for units that will be lost through redevelopment. The County should look to past successful housing plans, such as the 1 for 1 strategy used in the Seven Corners plan, replacing all lost affordable units at or below 60% of AMI.⁵

The Embark Richmond Highway task force and the county should be proactive and aggressive in identifying and implementing strategies to preserve existing affordable housing and add new affordable units to maintain the level of affordability that currently exists in the Route 1 corridor.

References

¹Fairfax County Department of Housing and Community Development. November 2012. "Low and Moderate Income Housing Guide."

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/rha/01-2013-lowmoderateguide.pdf>

²US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). March 6, 2015. "HUD Median Income for Fiscal Year 2015."

<http://www.vhda.com/BusinessPartners/PropertyOwnersManagers/Income-Rent-Limits/Income%20and%20Rent%20Limits%20Archive/2015HUD-Income-Limits.pdf>

³⁻⁴Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance (NVAHA). 2011.

"Charting a Way Forward: Preserving Market Rate Affordable Housing in Northern Virginia's Inner Suburbs." http://nvaha.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/NVAH001_PreservStudy_Web.pdf

⁵Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning. 2013. "Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan: Baileys Planning District."

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/area1/baileys-sevencornerscbc.pdf>

Appendix A: Richmond Highway Corridor Affordable Housing Catalogue

Housing Type	Property Name	Address	Units
County-Owned			
	The Atrium		37
	Audubon Apts	3429 Holly Hill Rd	119
	Belle View		40
	Colchester Towne	7899 Audubon Ave	8
	Old Mill Gardens	7997 Audubon Ave	96
	Tavenner Lane	7200 Tavenner Lane	24
	West Ford I	7911 Fordson Rd	102 (combined)
	West Ford II	7911 Fordson Rd	102 (combined)
	West Ford III	7911 Fordson Rd	102 (combined)
Fairfax Rental Program			
	Colchester Towne	7899 Audubon Ave	24
	Glenwood Mews		15
	Holly Acres	3514 Huntley Manor Lane	2
	Island Creek		
	Murraygate Village	7800 Belford Dr	37
	Tavenner Lane	7200 Tavenner Lane	24
	Woodley Hills Estates (lot rental only)	2865 Camellia Dr	
	Lafayette Apartments	7136 Groveton Gardens Road	380
Fairfax Senior Residences			
	Gum Springs Glen	7837 Richmond Hwy	60

	Morris Glen	7000 Schoonmaker Ct	
	Lincolnia	4710 N Chambliss St	
Rental Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs)			
	Sullivan Place	5575 Vincent Gate Terrace	
	Courts at Huntington Station	5950 Grand Pavilion Way	
	Ridgeleigh at Van Dorn	5901 Coverdale Way	
	Bailey's Crossing	3602 South 14th St	
Privately Owned Federally Assisted Rental Units			
	Creekside Village	7986 Janna Lee Ave	
	Edsall Station	6272 Edsall Rd	
	Spring Gardens	7959 Richmond Hwy	
	Stony Brook	3426 Buckman Road	
	Strawbridge Square	5128 Lincoln Ave	
Privately Owned Apartment Communities			
	Beacon Hill Apartments	3100 Southgate Dr	
	Carydale Village	8073 Buckman Court	
	Cherry Arms Apts	7131 Richmond Hwy	
	City Side Apts	6034 Richmond Hwy	
	Edsall Gardens	6416 Edsall Rd, #201	
	Meadow Woods	3308 Lockheed Boulevard	
	Mount Vernon Apts	8263 Russell Rd, #201	
	Skyview Apts	8424 Skyview Dr	

	Washington Square Apts	8547 Richmond Hwy	
	Woodlawn Gardens	8488 Richmond Hwy	
Privately Owned Low Income Housing Tax Credit Properties			
	Creekside Village	7986 Janna Lee Ave	
	Hunting Creek	Jackies Lane	
	Lafayette Apartments	7136 Groveton Gardens Road	
	Manchester Lakes Senior Apartments	7131-7161 Silver Lake Boulevard	

Market Rate Affordable Housing			Monthly Rent per 1 Bedroom
	The Courts at Huntington Station	5950 Grand Pavilion Way	\$1,668
	The Shelby	6200 N Kings Hwy	\$1,431
	Kings Gardens	6300 S Kings Hwy	\$1,340
	The Beacon of Groveton	6870 Richmond Hwy	\$1,560
	Cherry Arms Apts	7131 Richmond Hwy	\$1,319
	Meadow Woods	3308 Lockheed Boulevard	\$1,009
	Mount Vernon Square Apts	2722 Arlington Dr	\$1,220
		7932 Silverada Place	\$2,100
		3820 El Camino Place	\$1,500
	Skyview Apts	8424 Skyview Dr	\$1,195
	Sacramento Square	5401 Claymont Dr	\$1,270
	Abbotts Run	5711 Woodlawn Gable Dr	\$1,385
	Oaks of Woodlawn	8799 Old Colony Way	\$1,435
	Belvoir Square	9142 Richmond Hwy	\$1,640
	City Side at Huntington Metro	6034 Richmond Hwy	\$1,055
		2624 Wagon Drive	\$1,600

		6516 Hillside Lane	\$2,250
	Beacon Hill Apartments	3100 Southgate Dr	\$999
		2306 Emmett Dr	\$1,500
		3401 Groveton Street	\$2,150
		3333 Beechcliff Dr	\$2,650
		3553 Huntley Manor Lane	\$2,250
	Lafayette Apartments	7136 Groveton Gardens Road	\$1,137
		7528 Coxton Court	\$1,750
		7670 Audubon Meadow Way	\$2,700
		7833 Fordson Rd	\$2,300
		7904 Mount Woodley Place	\$2,250
		7971 Audubon Ave	\$1,200
		8204 Mount Vernon Hwy	\$2,100
	Mallard Courts Apts	4511 Colony Ct	\$1,150
	Washington Square Apts	8547 Richmond Hwy	\$1,025
	Clusters at Woodlawn	8630 Beekman Place	\$1,400

*Calculations of affordability based on 2015 Fairfax County Area Median Income
2015 AMI: \$109,2000 for a family of four
Housing is considered affordable when rent is at or below 120% of AMI
Affordable rent: \$3,640

*Privately-owned, market-rate affordable housing based on searches for rental units under 120% of AMI using the websites:
Zillow.com, Apartmentguide.com, Apartments.com, Apartmentfinder.com, Realtor.com, Trulia.com, and Homes.com

*All rents based on one-bedroom unit, or smallest unit within rental complex, Market Rate Affordable Housing meant as a representation of the larger stock of privately-owned affordable units

*This catalogue does not include information on all existing market-rate affordable units. It acts as a summary of the types and locations of affordable units.