



Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations

Helping Civic Organizations Remain Educated for 65 years

Post Office Box 9252

Virginia Beach, VA 23450-9252

www.vbccco.org

Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations Conversations with the City

Topic: Affordable Housing

Definition of Affordable Housing:

Affordable housing refers to housing units that are affordable by low-income or middle-income households. In general, housing is considered "affordable" if the household spends no more than 30% of its income on rent or mortgage payments, including utilities. Affordable housing is critical for maintaining the social and economic health of communities, ensuring that individuals of all income levels have access to safe and stable housing([WHRO](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).

Why is Affordable Housing Important to Citizens and Residents?

Affordable housing is crucial to ensuring that Virginia Beach remains a livable city for all its residents. The lack of affordable housing affects not only low-income families but also key workers in essential sectors like retail, healthcare, and hospitality. These workers often cannot afford to live in the city where they work, placing strains on the local economy and public services. Approximately one-third of households in Virginia Beach are considered housing cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing([WHRO](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).

The rise in home prices—up 36% since 2016—has only compounded these challenges, making it difficult for both renters and potential homeowners to afford housing. For the city's tourism-driven economy, a stable workforce is essential, yet many employees find themselves priced out of the market([WHRO](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).

Challenges/Concerns Related to Affordable Housing:

- **High Cost of Homeownership:** With property values continuing to rise, it has become increasingly difficult for middle-income families and first-time homebuyers to enter the market([WHRO](#)).
- **Lack of Affordable Rental Options:** Rent prices have surged, leaving essential workers in industries like hospitality and retail struggling to find housing. Currently, there are only about 4,755 affordable rental units, far below what is needed to meet demand([City of Virginia Beach](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).



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- **Zoning and Land Use Restrictions:** High land costs and restrictive zoning laws limit the development of new affordable housing projects([City of Virginia Beach](#))([VBCCO](#)).
- **Special Populations:** Virginia Beach's affordable housing resources are insufficient for vulnerable populations such as seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness ([City of Virginia Beach](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).

What are Potential Solutions or Approaches to Affordable Housing?

1. **Mixed-Income Housing Developments:** Virginia Beach can incentivize developers to create mixed-income housing, where market-rate and affordable housing coexist. This approach maintains community diversity and helps integrate affordable housing into broader neighborhoods([City of Virginia Beach](#)).
2. **Zoning Reform:** Reforming zoning laws to allow for more multi-family housing developments could alleviate some of the supply issues. The City has considered Expanded Housing Opportunities (EHO), which would allow more flexible development in traditionally single-family neighborhoods([VBCCO](#))([ArlingtonWINS](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).
3. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Partnering with nonprofits and religious organizations to utilize their land for affordable housing can also provide a significant boost to the city's housing stock. These partnerships have been successful in other regions and offer a model for sustainable development([City of Virginia Beach](#))([WHRO](#)).
4. **Streamlining the Development Process:** Reducing bureaucratic hurdles in permitting and development approvals can make building affordable housing more attractive to developers. Simplifying these processes will help speed up construction and reduce overall costs([City of Virginia Beach](#)).
5. **Expanding Housing Assistance Programs:** Increasing the availability of housing vouchers and rental assistance programs can help alleviate some of the immediate pressure for low-income families. Expanding these programs, along with targeted rental assistance for seniors and disabled individuals, would directly support the most vulnerable populations([City of Virginia Beach](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).
6. **Community Education and Engagement:** The City has initiated a "Housing Matters" campaign to educate residents about affordable housing's impact on the community. Increasing awareness and reducing misconceptions can help build broader public support for affordable housing developments([City of Virginia Beach](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).



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What Would You Like to Know from City Representatives?

- What specific actions will the City take to support the construction of new affordable housing over the next five years?
- How does the City plan to make housing more affordable for key workers, such as those in healthcare and tourism, who currently cannot afford to live in Virginia Beach?
- What zoning changes are being proposed to accommodate more multi-family housing developments in traditionally single-family neighborhoods?

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