

April 3, 2024

Franconia Government Center Workforce Housing FAQ's

Affordable housing lays the foundation for achieving quality of life while balancing the generational demographics that keep our area economically healthy. Decent housing is a basic need and is necessary especially when increasing transportation costs, childcare expenses, and paying back education loans are preventing young families from being able to afford to live in our area. People deserve a life where: 1) housing costs won't make them cash poor, 2) leftover income is available for other essential expenses, 3) saving for the future is possible, 4) they may live close to work, and 5) won't have to spend time commuting and contributing to traffic congestion. A life most of us --who already call Franconia home -- are fortunate to enjoy. As a community we benefit when essential workers such as teachers, police officers, firefighters, and medical personnel as well as recent college graduates, can live near where they work. Making affordable, quality housing available in our community will keep existing businesses and services healthy while attracting new businesses and services that benefit everyone.

Urgent Need

Affordable housing is urgently needed in Fairfax County. The high cost of housing, whether owning or renting, groceries, childcare, medical, vehicle property taxes etc., make this area unaffordable for service providers and essential workers. County projections indicate 15K new affordable units will be needed by 2034.

- The Board of Supervisors is committed to providing at least 10K units by 2034 and has adopted a policy of **no net loss** of existing "market affordable" rental homes.
- The Board of Supervisors acknowledges that Fairfax County cannot attract businesses if we fail to provide affordable housing for their workforce.
- "We have over 100,000 vacant jobs in Northern Virginia. Talk to any employer in the region and they will say they cannot find employees because employees cannot afford to live here."
Chairman Jeffrey McKay, Fairfax County Housing Symposium, March 6, 2024

What is this housing and who is it for?

The Board is committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing in all geographic areas of the County and has directed staff to evaluate the use of county-owned land to reduce development costs. Development costs may be further reduced if the proposed development applies, qualifies and receives any applicable state and federal tax credits.

Affordable housing benefits county employees and essential workers.

- 20% of the units will be reserved for qualified public sector employees including police, firefighters, teachers, and medical personnel. The new Springfield/Franconia INOVA addition will need additional employees who will be eligible for this housing.
- Starting salaries for workers in essential fields inadequately cover housing costs. Local apartment rentals are \$2000 -- \$2400 monthly for 1-2 bedroom units which exceeds affordability.
- If workers could live near where they work, commute times and traffic would decrease, leading to a better quality of life for everyone.

Implementation Plan

- This is workforce housing intended for working residents. Units will rent to eligible applicants earning 40-80% AMI (Area Median Income), yielding an average of 60%. Because the AMI for a family of four in 2023 was \$152,100, this equates to an income range of approximately \$61,000 - \$122,000. Single renters would earn between \$41,000 and \$83,000 to qualify.
- Incomes will be checked annually to ensure continued eligibility.
- The proposed building is smaller than many affordable housing properties with a maximum of 120 units and no more than four stories high.

Why is this particular location desirable?

- Fairfax Connector Bus line stop right in front of the property
- Within 2.5 miles of Franconia Springfield Blue Line Metrorail Station
- I95/I495 interchange- 1.5 miles
- Giant, Safeway, Springfield Town Center including Target < 2 miles
- Less than half mile of Franconia Elementary School and 1 mile of Edison High School
- Within 3 miles of NOVA Community College
- Within 1.5 miles of Inova Healthplex
- Proximity to police and fire stations

This proposed affordable housing will provide a vibrant, well-designed new building of market rate quality construction on Franconia Road that will bring new residents to the area to work, shop, and recreate. The community will be engaged for input on building design. This building will be professionally managed and maintained as a quality marketplace project.

CONCEPT PHOTO



Concerns from the community:

1. *Some community members prefer other uses be considered for this site, such as more space for the Franconia Fire Department, expanding the Koinonia food pantry, or as a community center and park.* Other uses will be reviewed and may be included as a co-location option.
2. *Some community members are concerned that more people will cause increased traffic and overburden crowded schools.* Potential traffic and school impacts will be studied and discussed during the rezoning stage. Environmental and drainage issues will also be addressed in the planning process. The required land use and development review zoning processes will provide a comprehensive review of the proposed development impacts including environmental, transportation and infrastructure analyses. Community meetings and citizen input will continue during these processes. Appropriate mitigation strategies will be incorporated as necessary.
3. *Some community members expressed concern that there is an increased cancer risk from benzene exposure due to the Franconia Government Center's close proximity to several gas stations.* The Virginia Department of Health, using data from the Virginia Cancer Registry, conducted a cancer cluster analysis for this site in 2015. Statistical analysis comparing the incidences of cancer at the Franconia Government Center were not different or were lower than incidences in the rest of the state, concluding a cancer cluster does not exist there.

Franconia District has 130K people, 22% Hispanic, 19% African American, 15% Asian. We need everyone's voice heard at the upcoming public meetings, held at John Lewis High School, 6540 Franconia Rd.:

- Saturday, April 13th from 12 to 2:00pm (receive input from community)
- Monday, April 22nd from 6 to 8:00 pm (receive input from community)
- Monday, May 6th from 6 to 8:00 pm (report back to community)

Please plan to show up on these dates where as a community, we can discuss how we ALL may benefit from the process - looking at our environment and traffic and schools so we develop responsibly!