

Livability 22202 Housing Affordability Workshop 1 Summary

Executive Summary

Residents of 22202 came together to discuss housing affordability as part of the greater neighborhood Livability initiative. After listening to historical and needs-related contexts, small groups worked together to identify where they agreed barriers existed to housing and what values they held in terms of addressing those barriers. The major areas of barriers identified include: History, Political will, Policy and Zoning Barriers and Coalition needs. The major value categories were: Diversity, Community, Livability, Safety, and Engagement.

Overview

On January 25th from 10:00 to 12:30pm, the **Livability 22202 coalition**, representing residents of the three civic associations surrounding the Amazon HQ2 site, held **Workshop 1 on Housing Affordability**. Livability 22202 aims to bring together residents in very different communities, from high-density urban to mid-rise rental, to low-density single family, across all ages and incomes, and build a common vision for how to create more housing affordability. The first workshop, which brought **35 attendees** across Arlington Ridge, Aurora Highlands, and Crystal City, sought to achieve the following objectives:

- **Explore and deepen** the housing focus of Livability 22202 platform
- **Recruit and raise awareness with neighbors**, both renters and homeowners, of the importance of housing affordability and best practices
- **Begin to develop a shared solutions agenda** that articulates the community's perceived housing barriers and values to shape concrete actions for Workshop 2

The event brought together a combination of **historical context, data, and personal stories** to express the urgency of the housing affordability crisis and to work in small groups to begin shaping community-led solutions. The program began with an overview of Livability 22202 and objectives of the day from co-organizers Ben D'Avanzo, Susan English, and Zach Komes.

History Presentation

Karl VanNewkirk, a historian with the Arlington Historical Society, provided historical context of Arlington's growth. While 20 minutes was not enough time to cover the 270-year story, Mr. VanNewkirk discussed and provided photos showing how transportation greatly affected housing development in 22202. The area's housing stock has ranged from Civil War era Freedman's Village and East Arlington, brickyard and railyard worker houses in today's Crystal City, to summer cottages on the Ridge, and 20s, 30s and WWII-era bungalows and Cape Cods in between, along with the redevelopment of Potomac Yards as office and residential high-rise. Early streetcar lines, highway building during the post-war expansion (I-395 and Rt. 1), and the coming of Metro in the 70s and 80s affected the area. Metro development, a key asset of our area, was marketed to Arlingtonians in the 70s



Figure 1. Queen City, a historically African American enclave located in what is now Crystal City, was destroyed by eminent domain to build the area around the Pentagon.

as density for convenience and new revenue, but that gave us a cultural disconnect between neighborhoods which we struggle with today.

Racism also shaped our housing history. What we now call Arlington went from being a part of Fairfax in 1742, to a part of the District in 1801, returned to Virginia in 1847, separated from Alexandria City in 1870, and was renamed as Arlington only in 1920. As its regional identity evolved, going from slave to free to integrated, both the area's history of red-lining and segregated housing, and its importance as a transportation hub close to Washington continue to be factors which have shaped the housing stock.

Housing Needs Panel

With this grounding in history, we then sought to understand the housing affordability crisis from a variety of diverse perspectives. The following individuals volunteered to share their personal stories on their housing needs and aspirations:

- **Ann** is a renter in Arlington Ridge who lives with a disability and, due to rent increases breaking the cap of the county program she participates in, she was forced to leave the area to live in a dedicated affordable housing building, which is subsidized in part with funding from the County's Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF). She discussed that, in her new building outside of 22202, she will be much more limited in independence and mobility without the walkable, transit-rich neighborhood she has called home for many years.
- **Jane** is a renter in Aurora Highlands who enjoys renting in 22202 but is concerned about how the area's housing shortage will increasingly strain her family, including her newborn second child, as Amazon HQ2 arrives just across the street from her building. Jane is happy to rent forever, as long as she can find affordable options that work for her family.
- **Judy**, an active civically engaged senior, is a renter in Crystal City. Because of rent increases, she has moved three times to different apartments in the neighborhood, including recently downsizing into a smaller unit to help make it more affordable. She hopes that the area will produce housing stock for everyone, including older residents like her.
- **David** and his family were renters in 22202. Despite being a working professional with a legal career, he shared during the session that, because of a shortage of "missing middle" homeownership housing stock, his family will be moving to Fairfax County, where townhouses in his income range are available.
- **Robin** is a homeowner in Aurora Highlands in one of the limited "missing middle" development options in our area. She and her family own two units, living in one and renting out another, and expressed the importance of housing affordability to our economy and workforce. She moved to the neighborhood because it met her family's needs, but as her kids grow older, she is concerned that she may not be able to find housing that works.



Figure 2. Panelists share their personal housing stories.

The organizers thank the “storyteller” participants for sharing some of the most intimate parts of their lives with our attendees and for their continued advocacy to support housing affordability in our area.

Housing Needs in Arlington

Finally, the workshop’s final presentation was from Michelle Winters, Executive Director of the Alliance for Housing Solutions, an affordable housing coalition and advocacy group based in Arlington. Michelle provided an overview of housing affordability trends in the region and Arlington specifically. Affordable privately-owned rental units in Arlington that are not subsidized, also called Market-Rate Affordable Rental Units (MARKs), have declined by 84% since 2000. Homeownership is similarly increasingly out of reach for too many Arlingtonians. These challenges, while present before Amazon was announced to be coming to 22202, will be growingly strained without further action.



Discussion of Housing Barriers and Values

The discussion then shifted to community members in 22202. Small groups were first asked to brainstorm their perspectives on **housing barriers** in 22202:

1. History	Historical patterns of zoning and exclusionary redlining	<i>“practice of racial/economic barriers” “lack of new homes” “aging residents” “lack of planning for long-term” “lack of housing stock”</i>
2. Political Will	Need for focus and urgency by our elected and corporate leaders	<i>“county does one thing but policies do the opposite” “lack of local government authority” “lack of political will to impose price controls or housing incentives” “lack of a long-term affordability plan” “developers want rentals not condos”</i>
3. Policy and Zoning Barriers	Limitations on development of new housing supply and resources to ensure all can afford to live here	<i>“state policies vs county policies” “R5 zoning not north of Lee Highway” “speculation” “limited starter owner options” “construction costs and taxes” “expansion of property is difficult” “no restrictions on rent increases”</i>
4. Coalition	Need for residents of all backgrounds making housing a top priority	<i>“better education” “transient community” “neighbor expectations” “engagement with the renters” “NIMBYs” “lack of community involvement with developers”</i>

Afterwards, residents were asked to brainstorm their perspective on **housing values** that should shape future priorities in 22202:

1. Diversity	Housing must support a diversity of races, classes, ages, abilities, ownership, and housing types	<i>"provide affordable housing for all sectors of the community"</i> <i>"diversity of housing type which allows diversity of people"</i> <i>"variety of housing types in multiple locations"</i> <i>"diversity for all ages, stages of ability"</i> <i>"needs of lower income and middle class"</i> <i>"diverse cultures"</i> <i>"care of people through their whole life cycle"</i>
2. Community	Housing must help build community and integration between our neighbors of all walks of life	<i>"connection and conversation"</i> <i>"friendship"</i> <i>"casual conversations"</i> <i>"community between residents"</i>
3. Livability	Housing must be combined with open space, transportation, essential services (schools/health), and small businesses for responsible neighborhood growth	<i>"coordinate with schools"</i> <i>"access public transportation"</i> <i>"access to health/food/retail/necessities"</i> <i>"sustainability" "nature and green space"</i> <i>"access, convenience"</i> <i>"reduce congestion"</i> <i>"public transportation and housing go together"</i>
4. Safety	Housing must promote community safety so all can feel comfortable here	<i>"safety, convenience"</i> <i>"need to be able to get around"</i>
5. Engagement	Housing must ensure voices of residents are respected at the table	<i>"we need presentations to elected leaders, JBG, zoning officials"</i> <i>"transparency"</i> <i>"engaged community"</i> <i>"promoting awareness of existing residents"</i> <i>"include renters"</i>

The community input provided in Workshop 1 will be used to shape our goals that will shape the solutions developed by the residents of 22202 during Workshop 2.