

## SPECIAL TOPIC WORKSHOP #4 SUMMARY HOUSING



PlanQAC's fourth Special Topic Workshop was held virtually on Wednesday, March 17, 2021 at 1:30pm via WebEx and telephone call-in. The purpose was to solicit community input on topics related to the Comprehensive Plan, more specifically Housing. Below is a summary of the Workshop's discussions and participant questions.



### Discussion Topic: What are QAC's greatest housing assets? What are QAC's greatest housing needs?

#### Assets:

- Among the things that are of assets, is that we have luxury housing providing tax revenue.
- Not long ago there were 2,500 available lots IN the county that are basically waiting for a building permit. Those lots are in all four corners of the county to be exercised whenever they want.
- Some multi-family units have been built around Kent Island and have provided moderately priced units as part of those projects.
- We have a surprisingly high population and workforce density; there are cool opportunities to explore different types of housing; could we as a county take the lead on incorporating different types of housing?
- We have the opportunity to rehab some great houses that are already in the county.

#### Needs:

- There really is a need for housing that can be afforded by the folks who work here. People have to drive an hour to work because they cannot afford to live within the county.
- Need entry level housing for young professionals
- The reality is that there is a housing shortage in QAC and have had that shortage for 30-40 years; we graduate 560 students annually; we've only built 142 houses, so no one who even LIVES within QAC can live there. Land use restrictions are making it hard for housing to be built.
- We have a homeless shelter; one of the difficulties is next step housing for shelter guests. We have case management services that help them get in touch with different resources but the housing stock to move them into is non-existent. Public housing is cumbersome and difficult to manage.
- Affordable housing is often the most expensive type of housing as far as what it costs the county – every time a new house is built it adds up to a tax increase. I hope that that is at least factored into the equation.
- Not all people who need a home are prepared to purchase a home or can afford to build a home. We have a shortage of lots in general across the country. We are always waitlisted for apartments because people don't have options. I disagree with the comment about it costing the county money because the fees raised around apartments – don't think it's a fair statement. What can we do to make units affordable? Cost of construction is skyrocketing, so now is not a good time. Fee schedule was outrageous when building apartments previously. A 1 bedroom allocation is charged for 150 gallons when the national average is 50 gallons – we're purchasing water allocation multiple more times than is necessary which makes the fees a challenge. Looking at our structure from a sanitary standpoint would be helpful. We provide moderately priced units with the QAC Housing Department – great program, but would make some sort of accommodation for the fees to help offset the fact that you won't make the same amount of money on it. Code currently doesn't allow for different types of housing (cottage vs. single family vs. apartment)

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- Commenter lives in Grasonville: after 11 years of renting just recently purchased finally. Almost impossible to find a rental unit that was reasonable. \$1500/month in rent for a two bedroom; A lot of building happening that doesn't seem well thought out as far as environmentally safe or traffic concerns; what about mixed use housing?

### Discussion Topic: Housing Vision

- Walkability should be explicitly mentioned in the vision statement.
- In some ways we have obtained this vision statement.
- Governmental costs - sewer allocations, water, impact fees, excessive standards all make diverse choice difficult to accomplish. Luxury homes can pay enough for builders to be profitable, government subsidies at the lower end do the same - leaving out the middle.
- Much of the housing here is in incorporated towns, which do not seem to be governed by the QAC Comprehensive Plan. For example, does the County Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance apply to those Towns? How can we ensure that those towns comply with the QAC Plan Visions and commitments?

### Discussion Topic: What projects/goals should be focused on over the next 10 years in regard to Housing?

- Our county really needs a shelter. Haven Ministries operates out of a church. The need for helping folks within our community is huge. This past year, 95 people received help, 36 of them children.
- Simplify our land use policy.
- We need to reconsider infrastructure if we're going to build in the towns.

*All comments and questions will be considered during the development of PlanQAC. Additional comments or questions can be submitted through the project website: <https://www.qacplan2021.com/>*