

Allowing more homes - and smarter rules to build them

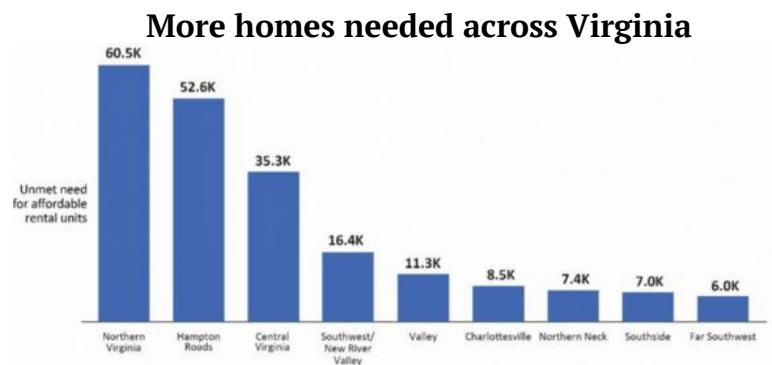
Across Virginia, **housing is becoming too expensive** because we simply don't have enough homes to meet people's needs and budgets. **We're short more than 200,000 homes**—and that shortage is driving up prices everywhere.

When supply is low, **people with higher incomes outbid working families**. That means teachers, child care workers, first responders, and service workers often can't afford to live in the communities they serve. **They're pushed farther out, facing long commutes, and leaving local employers struggling to hire.**

The Root Problem: Red Tape & Outdated Zoning Barriers

Many of Virginia's local zoning laws block the kinds of homes we need most:

- Smaller, more affordable homes like townhomes and duplexes
- Apartments near jobs, schools, and grocery stores
- In-law suites or backyard cottages for aging parents or young workers



<https://jlarc.virginia.gov/landing-2021-affordable-housing-in-virginia.asp>

These rules are outdated—and their impacts are not accidental. After explicitly racial zoning codes were struck down in *Buchanan v. Warley*, many municipalities replaced them with zoning codes that still achieved the same exclusionary ends: large-lot, single-family-only areas that kept Black, Brown, and lower-income families out. Those same patterns persist today and continue to prevent the housing we need from being built.

Even when faith communities want to build affordable housing on land they own, they are often forced to go through lengthy, expensive, and uncertain rezoning processes. These barriers delay or derail projects that could offer homes to seniors, families, and essential workers—right in the heart of our communities.



Unity Homes at Ballston, Arlington.

It took 17 years from Central United Methodist Church's initial planning discussions in 2007 to the grand opening of the 144 affordable homes in April 2024. Only 2 years of that was construction.

A shortage of homes hurts everyone

The housing shortage has a ripple effect: When there aren't enough homes, even people with decent jobs are forced into subsidized housing—leaving those with the lowest incomes with nowhere to go. That's why the solution isn't just about public funding—it's about allowing more homes of all types to be built. More funding allows homes for the lowest income Virginians, but without changing the zoning rules, we are stuck building a few limited types of homes and apartments in very few areas in cities.

The State's Role: Setting the Floor for Housing

States like Montana, Arizona, Oregon, and Maryland have taken action to address the housing shortage—**legalizing more home types and cutting red tape**. These bipartisan reforms prove that statewide standards can work.

Virginia must do the same. Local zoning laws are blocking the homes our communities need—especially more affordable options like duplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). By setting a statewide floor, Virginia can allow more homes of all shapes and sizes—making our cities and towns more affordable, shortening commutes, and helping local businesses hire locally.

State action would:

- Create clear, consistent rules across the Commonwealth
- Require every community to do its part
- Cut unnecessary red tape that stops good projects, including on faith and nonprofit land
- Maintain local community standards that help make sure new homes fit in with existing neighborhoods, but don't prevent new homes from being built

It's time for Virginia to lead: We need champions willing to take action

Solving Virginia's housing challenges **takes all three:**

- **Allow more homes** by fixing zoning laws (most urgent)
- **Invest in affordable housing** for those with the lowest incomes who the market won't reach
- **Protect renters** from displacement and instability

But none of these will work at scale if we don't start by legalizing the kinds of homes people can actually afford to live in. And we can only do that if a bold group of state leaders is willing to stand up to the opposition, cast a clear vision, and lead with courage.

It's time for common-sense, statewide zoning reform.



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