

**Loudoun County Planning Commission  
Public Hearing  
Wednesday, November 7, 2018**

**Statement of the  
Dulles Area Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup>  
Presented by  
Holly Weatherwax, President  
Lars Henriksen, Past President and  
Representative to the Comprehensive Plan Stakeholders Committee**

On behalf of the Dulles Area Association of REALTORS<sup>®</sup> and our 1,500 REALTOR<sup>®</sup> and Affiliate members, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Loudoun 2040 General Plan.

Loudoun 2040 is an extremely important document that will guide the future growth and development of our county. It is significant that throughout Loudoun 2040, there are numerous goals and strategies designed to provide a diverse housing stock. DAAR supports allowing for higher residential density in certain areas, and incentives to increase the availability of housing that is affordable and attainable to households all along the income spectrum. We are pleased to see the emphasis on creating and sustaining viable communities that include recreational, natural, commercial, and other uses. We appreciate the more comprehensive approach to transportation that links communities together locally and regionally, creating multi-modal transportation networks, and calling for improvements to the mass transit system.

DAAR supports the Vision of the Housing Chapter in Loudoun 2040 to provide “housing options that can accommodate a variety of lifestyles, households, ages, cultures, market preferences, incomes, and needs.<sup>1</sup>” The Chapter makes clear that providing an “adequate supply of housing – varied in type and price, both rental and for-sale, and located near necessary services and amenities – is a fundamental component of a complete, inclusive, healthy, and enduring community.<sup>2</sup>”

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<sup>1</sup> Loudoun 2040 General Plan, Draft Version: October 23, 2018, page Chapter 4-2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

We hope that the vision articulated in the Housing Chapter will be realized. We feel, however, that many of the policies, strategies, and actions included in the Land Use and Implementation chapters would hinder, if not prevent implementation of the policies, strategies, and actions included in the Housing Chapter. There are those who rely on fear and claim that residential development has and will continue to ruin the character and nature of our county. We believe that retaining the great qualities of the county and addressing housing needs are not conflicting goals. With planning, Loudoun County can accommodate needed residential development AND retain the unique qualities of Loudoun County!

DAAR recommends that the Planning Commission closely review the Land Use and Implementation chapters and remove language that would negatively impact the development of affordable and attainable housing. Flexible policies and tools to address housing needs can, and should be, established and administered in a way that retains the qualities that make Loudoun County a special place in which to live, work, and play.

It is critical that Loudoun 2040 includes plans for needed housing that is affordable and attainable. As the Planning Commission reviews the draft Loudoun 2040, we hope the commitment to housing will be retained. We offer the following recommendations on ways in which we feel Loudoun 2040 could be strengthened.

**DAAR believes that Loudoun 2040 should:**

- Encourage development of affordable and attainable housing.
- Include strategically-targeted residential development.
- Be kept current to address changing market conditions.

**Encourage development of affordable and attainable housing.**

Not only is the average price of a home rising (up to \$520,303 in September 2018 from \$506,294 in September 2017), the county estimates a need for over 18,000 additional units by 2040, especially single-family housing (2017 Housing Needs Assessment commissioned by Loudoun County). Adding to this crisis is the lack of housing today! In September 2018, Loudoun County had the fewest September homes

listed for sale in over a decade. The low inventory resulted in the sales price of homes to increase, making housing in Loudoun County unaffordable and unattainable for many.

Policy statements to create housing that is affordable and attainable require supportive land use policies if they are to become a reality. Unfortunately, the draft plan contains several land use policies that are inflexible and overly prescriptive. These policies would make it difficult to provide such fundamental housing.

Therefore, the land use policies should be strengthened to encourage development of affordable and attainable housing. These policies should also include flexible development and design standards, such as increased building heights or decreased open space requirements on individual parcels, to maximize housing diversification to meet market demand.

### **Include strategically-targeted residential development.**

The Vision of the Transition Policy Area (TPA) provides an opportunity to accommodate a development pattern that promotes housing diversity<sup>3</sup>. Because there is a dwindling amount of land available for development in the suburban areas of the county, development in the TPA is critical to addressing the county's need for affordable and attainable housing.

The draft plan includes options for addressing the housing needs of the county. One option is to increase development of the county's needed affordable and attainable housing in the TPA. The plan should encourage innovative and diverse housing types, rather than requiring a conservation design approach<sup>4</sup>, to create communities that will address the need for more single-family housing.

DAAR is concerned that new language inserted into the Rural Policy Area would result in a decrease in the current by-right levels of residential development. This is a substantive change to the RPA that could significantly impact the county's ability to meet the critical need for affordable and attainable housing. DAAR strongly disagrees with

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<sup>3</sup> Loudoun 2040 General Plan, Draft Version: October 23, 2018, page Chapter 2-55.

<sup>4</sup> Loudoun 2040 General Plan, Draft Version, Redline: October 9, 2018, new Strategy 1.1 for TPA Policy 1, page Chapter 2-51.

including such a dramatic policy shift in the RPA without having public discussion, with citizen and stakeholder input, similar to the process for the Suburban Policy Area during Envision Loudoun.

### **Be kept current to address changing market conditions.**

The current comprehensive plan has been in place for over fifteen years. Comprehensive Plans need to be updated in order to respond and adapt to changing market conditions. The Virginia Code, Article 3, § 15.2-223 requires that a comprehensive plan must be reviewed at least every five years. Additionally, the real estate market is cyclical and follows a general seven-year pattern. The market is also based largely on supply and demand, which makes it difficult to predict.

Not only should the county regularly review and update its Comprehensive Plan in order to accommodate future changes in residential and commercial needs, it should also regularly examine and estimate its unmet housing needs and evaluate its housing programs for their effectiveness in addressing those needs. Additionally, the county should conduct and make public an annual growth study. Only through having accurate information will the county be able to adequately address current and future needs. It is important that the draft and final Loudoun 2040 General Plan be easily accessible online. This will allow citizens to follow the draft plan's progress and propose changes to the final plan in between updates.

We all know that there is a lack of housing that is affordable and attainable in Loudoun County. As young professionals and working families have an increasingly hard time finding housing they can afford, the entire community suffers. Local business owners cite the lack of affordable housing as a detriment to their efforts to attract and retain employees. Prospective businesses seeking to locate in the county are calling for – if not demanding – housing that is affordable for their workforce. Even Amazon is looking for a community where its employees would enjoy living. They seek a diversity of housing

options for their employees<sup>5</sup>, whose positions will range from CEO to the entry level salesperson. DAAR is confident that through the strengthening of Loudoun 2040, the county will be able to develop a wide-range of urban, suburban, and rural housing choices at all price levels that will attract businesses to locate within the county.

DAAR is honored to have been part of the process of drafting Loudoun 2040 through our participation on the Comprehensive Plan Stakeholders Committee. We stand ready to assist and support efforts that develop growth plans and policies that will increase the availability of housing choices and address the needs of our workforce.

**DAAR says YES! for housing that is affordable and attainable in Loudoun County.**



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<sup>5</sup> Amazon HQ2 RFP, pages 5-6.