

# Fairfax Considers Spending \$600K to House Two Families

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Some Fairfax County leaders want to pay \$600,000 to obtain affordable housing for two large families.

The county Board of Supervisors will decide Tuesday whether to acquire two vacant, single-family houses on West Ox Road, using hundreds of thousands of dollars in refinancing to enhance the county's affordable housing stock.

With the housing boom long gone, some have questioned the county's efforts -- curtailed last year -- to scoop up affordable housing.

"I can think of 315 million ways to spend the money," said Supervisor Pat Herrity, R-Springfield, referencing the county's projected budget gap. "Spending \$600,000 to purchase more affordable housing units when we're already one of the largest landlords in the county makes no sense at all." The money is available thanks to bond refinancing tied to a variety of county facilities, including the South County Government Center, expected to net \$3 million in savings.

Supervisors recently approved a blueprint calling for \$10 million next budget year to provide housing for the county's lowest-income residents, though some supervisors called it unrealistic. Chairwoman Sharon Bulova said the purchase would further satisfy their goal to end homelessness this decade.

"It's not easy to find ways to accommodate larger families with very low income," she said. On the price tag, she said, "That's the cost of a home. If you're going to house a family in a single-family home, that's about an average price."

The properties were used by the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, according to housing officials. They were expected to be sold, but county leaders decided instead to keep them for reduced-price housing.

The houses also need to be rehabilitated, which would be funded by \$200,000 in federal stimulus money, county officials said.

Supporters of the plan say the purchase would eliminate mortgage debt, while providing a roof for two large, low-income families without any new funding.

The county has taken more than 2,000 units out of the private market in recent years to provide more low-cost housing.