

F.C. Remains Way Behind in Affordable Housing

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Falls Church News-Press
May 12, 2010*

Editor,

Although congratulations are in order following last month's vote by the City Council to approve the Wilden Affordable Housing Project for seniors, Falls Church has a long way to go on the affordable housing front.

It is an embarrassment that, up until now, no actual affordable housing projects have been implemented since the launch of the Falls Church Housing Corporation 10 years ago. We lag far behind our neighboring localities in initiatives to promote affordable housing for older adults, people with disabilities, and single parents. Alexandria, Fairfax, and Arlington have achieved notable success in this area, and for a city that touts itself as forward-thinking, Falls Church should be ashamed of its snail's pace. Progress has been bogged down in rhetoric and outright snobbery, with the City Council rejecting numerous proposals to develop and re-zone housing geared toward low- and moderate-income families.

Of course, Falls Church was not immune to the housing bust that is responsible for the current state of our economy. Our foresight in erecting several new condominium buildings has backfired and now we need ways to recoup our investment. As it stands, the beautiful, new buildings along the Broad Street corridor are full of unsold units. As we seek to attract greater commercial density and additional sources of revenue to offset the recent 17 cent tax hike, why not make up for missed economic opportunities by converting a good portion of those empty buildings to affordable housing units?

Given the critical shortage of housing units in this region, Falls Church should capitalize on its central location and polish its reputation as a progressive city by filling that gap with its ready-made inventory. And history bears the pattern out that where people go, businesses follow. Everyone wins.

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