



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the Workforce Housing Task Force?**

On November 22, 2016, the County's Board of Supervisors adopted the 2035 Strategic Plan, which includes the goal of "Expanding and Diversifying the Local Economy."

As part of meeting that goal, the 2035 strategic plan calls for "...supporting strategies to facilitate the development of affordable and workforce housing."

The Workforce Housing Task Force was established to begin to develop those strategies.

The Task Force is comprised of a representative group of volunteer citizens representing a broad spectrum of community interests. The Task Force meets monthly on the 3rd Tuesday from 10:00am to noon. The public is very welcome to attend and participate in these meetings.

### **Who is on the Task Force?**

Mr. Stephen Anderson, HH Hunt Homes  
Ms. Jennifer Andrews-Weckerly  
Ms. Shernita Bethea, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission  
Ms. Robin Bledsoe, James City County Economic Development Authority  
Ms. Susan Gaston, Williamsburg Association of Realtors  
Ms. Janet Green, Habitat for Humanity Peninsula and Greater Williamsburg  
Mr. Roger Guernsey  
Mr. John "Jack" Haldeman, James City County Planning Commission  
Ms. Christina Hartless\*  
Ms. Ruth Larson, James City County Board of Supervisors  
Ms. Thresa Joyce, Virginia Community Capital  
Mr. Neil Mutreja, TM Associates  
Ms. Kim Orthner  
Mr. Gregory Stoerer, Williamsburg Landing  
Ms. Virginia Wertman  
Ms. Jeanne Zeidler, Williamsburg Health Foundation\*  
\*Co-chairs

### **What is “workforce housing”?**

There is no standard definition of “workforce housing” though it is a term used quite often by many communities throughout Virginia and the country. The Task Force has come to a consensus that we want to define workforce housing fairly broadly—as housing that is affordable to any working individual or family.

Or to put it another way – we’re defining workforce housing as the types of housing that we need here in James City County to ensure that we can attract and retain workers and continue to grow our local economy. So, this would include all types of housing affordable to households in the workforce.

### **How is “workforce housing” different from “affordable housing”?**

When some people talk about “affordable housing” they sometimes mean housing that is lower cost because it receives some type of public assistance. “Public housing” or “Section 8” housing are types of publicly-subsidized affordable housing. Housing built with the support of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is another type.

But other people think about the term “affordable housing” simply as housing that is affordable to people at all income levels. This definition of “affordable housing” includes “workforce housing,” housing that is generally affordable to people without a public subsidy.

### **Who lives in “affordable housing”?**

You might be surprised! Affordable housing serves a wide-range of populations including working families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Many people who need affordable housing already live and work here in James City County.

### **Why are you focused only on workers? Isn’t it important for other people to have housing they can afford?**

This Task Force has defined its objective to focus on working individuals and families. There are other efforts underway at the County level to provide support to individuals and families at risk of homelessness. Future efforts could focus specifically on senior housing needs. Our focus on working individuals and families does not mean we don’t think housing for others isn’t important but rather we wanted to be sure we defined our objective narrowly enough to ensure that we could come up with actionable strategies that were consistent with the County’s 2035 Strategic Plan.

### **Isn’t James City County pretty affordable compared to other places?**

Housing in James City County costs less than in some other places. However, there are many working households that have trouble finding housing they can afford in the County. These include workers that serve in key jobs that support our local economy, including people who work in our tourism destinations and our hotels and restaurants, as well as health care and social assistance workers.

### **Are there really full-time workers that can't afford housing in James City County?**

According to data analyzed by Virginia Tech, there are a number of key occupations in James City County that pay full-time wages that are too low to afford to rent the typical apartment in the County. These include some restaurant workers, child care providers, personal care aids, retail cashiers, maids and housekeepers, nursing assistants, laundry and dry cleaner workers, construction laborers, and teacher assistants. Other occupations in the County do not pay enough for workers to afford to buy the typical home in the County, even when there are two workers in the household. These occupations include medical assistants, warehouse workers, security guards, customer service representatives, pharmacy technicians, and administrative assistants.

### **Why don't employers just pay employees more if there is a housing affordability problem?**

We think it's important that workers earn living wages, so that is definitely an important part of the discussion. And at the same time, we need to focus on how to expand access to housing to help bring down the cost of housing and make it easier for working households to find housing that is right for them and affordable.

### **Won't putting apartments or smaller houses in my neighborhood lower my property values?**

There is a lot of research that shows that more diverse housing—including apartments, townhomes, and smaller single-family homes—does not have an adverse impact on property values. Fourteen different research publications studied the impact of lower-cost housing and found that this housing had either a positive or no effect on nearby property values. (See Enterprise Community Partners' report available online: <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/resources/affordable-housing-and-property-values-13525>).

### **If we build more housing, won't traffic get worse?**

Housing that is planned to be near public transit (e.g. WATA bus lines) or near jobs can actually reduce traffic congestion by allowing more people to live close to their jobs in James City County and to take transit rather than driving into the community. If some of the nearly 18,000 commuters who work in James City County lived in the County and reduced their commutes, it could be easier for all of us to get around on the roads.

### **Will lower-cost housing bring more crime to my neighborhood?**

Well-managed properties create a sense of community and a neighborhood watch environment. There is no good research showing a relationship between affordable housing and violent crime rates.

### **Can you help me find affordable housing in James City County?**

The best people to help you are James City County staff. They have information about rental and homeownership assistance that the County offers, as well as apartment listings and housing counselors. You can get information about Housing Programs in the County online at <https://www.jamescitycountyva.gov/237/Housing>. You can also call the County Housing office at 757-259-5340.

### **How can I get involved with the Workforce Housing Task Force?**

The Task Force meets each month on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday from 10:00am to noon. The public is more than welcome to attend and to participate in these meetings. There are other ways you can get involved:

Use the hashtag #afford\_JCCVA to talk about housing issues in James City County using social media

Email us with your questions, concerns, and ideas about workforce housing in the County at [jcc\\_whtf@jamcescitycountyva.gov](mailto:jcc_whtf@jamcescitycountyva.gov)

Take a flyer or other handouts to post in your place of work or to share with colleagues and neighbors

Attend public meetings on workforce housing issues – check out the County’s website for information about upcoming meetings