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# New Directions

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Volume 2, Issue 2

Winter 2001

Arlington New Directions Coalition  
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## Advocates Turn Out in Force to Support Affordable Housing Task Force Report

On Dec. 9, over 130 Arlingtonians responded to a call to action by affordable housing advocates to support stronger principles and goals for affordable housing than recommended by Arlington County staff. The standing-room-only ethnically and economically diverse crowd, 76 members of whom submitted speaker slips, came primarily to support recommendations made by the County Board-appointed Affordable Housing Task Force (AHTF), which had drawn fire from County staff.

AHTF members unanimously had proposed that the Board adopt principles and goals to guide Arlington affordable housing policy. In responding, County staff had recommended against adoption of any of the AHTF goals.

Several of AHTF's recommendations departed from Arlington's long-standing policies and practices on implementing affordable housing. Most significant were recommendations that the County concentrate subsidies on the neediest (i.e., "go deep, not broad"), develop affordable dwelling units (ADUs) in new construction, increase homeownership, encourage development of appropriate-size units for families, and distribute affordable housing throughout complexes, neighborhoods, and the entire County.

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## Monroe Calls for Review of County Support for Social Service Programs

Arlington County Board Member Charles Monroe has asked Arlington County nonprofit organizations to help with a County review of the status of social service programs here. In his remarks at the County Board's traditional Jan. 1 meeting, Monroe expressed concern that years of flat or limited County funding had adversely affected social service programs, whether provided by County staff or County-supported nonprofit organizations.

Monroe said that he had asked the County Manager to provide information on the impacts of County funding over the past 10 years on the delivery of social services in the County and a study is currently underway by the acting County Manager. He said he asked that the data be provided by Feb. 1 so that the public could have time to review and comment on the information prior to the 2001-2002 County budget hearings.\*

Monroe then directly asked nonprofit social service organizations to prepare for the County budget hearings by documenting the impacts County funding levels have had on their abilities to provide quality services over the past 10 years.

"If you have had difficulty in maintaining competent staff due to non-competitive salaries, show us those figures. If you have had to reduce your clientele due to flat or reduced funding, be ready to give us the percentage, as well as how you arrived at that figure. Have backup documents to support your position," he said. The Board also will demand firm figures on the need for nonprofits, he added.

If the data shows that the quantity and/or quality of social services has declined absolutely or in face of rising needs, "we will be at issue, and the debate will be joined," he said.

Monroe said he has asked the County Manager

- to identify social service programs that have been eliminated or cut or that have failed to keep up with documented needs over the past 10 years;
- to review the County's financial support to the operating budgets of nonprofit organizations delivering social services in the County;

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\*ANDC will be following this issue at the forthcoming hearings. The ANDC list serve *ArlNewDir* will provide updates. E-mail [RouleauMary@gateway.net](mailto:RouleauMary@gateway.net) for assistance.

## Opinion Page

### Observations on What “The Arlington Way” Means Today

By Todd Endo

Last January, the Committee of 100 asked me to sit on a panel and discuss “The Arlington Way.” I agreed and gave a generally positive view of The Arlington Way, although I said that it needed a major overhaul to take into account Arlington’s diverse populations. Now, a year later, I am more convinced than ever that, by and large, Arlington’s elected officials and others in positions of power in the County are misusing a concept that once was useful in bringing community viewpoints into the County’s decision-making processes.

My conviction rests primarily on my most recent experiences with political and planning processes in Arlington. In this article, I will give as an example the Columbia Pike planning process, although the faults in this process do not stand alone. Other examples of flawed process in the County include delays in considering the future of the Arlington Mill Community Center and the fact that the County Board-appointed Affordable Housing Task Force did not include any members of the most active affordable housing group in recent memory, the Save Arna Valley Coalition, among others.

#### *The Arlington Way Needs Radical Redefinition*

I once believed that the County simply needed to be more inclusive in terms of who was invited to participate in political and planning meetings and to make sure that a greater diversity of Arlingtonians were accommodated in terms of the timing, location, and circumstances (such as language translation) of such meetings. I once believed that people of goodwill would tinker with the mechanisms of appointment and process and ensure that representative populations in Arlington were not left out. Now I believe this is not enough. The Arlington Way must be radically redefined.

Historically, federal workers who led the creation of The Arlington Way were very similar to the people who were elected to office in Arlington. They were generally well educated, anglo professionals comfortable with establishing congenial structures and processes through which they could inform, shape, and influence public policy. My guess is that a sociogram from those days would show that Arlington’s elected officials called on these particular citizens when they needed to confer about policy and then listened carefully to what they had to say. There were informal overlaps as well—children attending the same schools, memberships in the same civic associations or service clubs, and so on—that reinforced communication through more formal structures and processes.

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### Observations by a Longtime Arlington Affordable Housing Advocate

By Charles Rinker

I am currently working on a housing project in the District of Columbia and have found it striking, once again, how the District government extends more protection than Arlington (or other suburban jurisdictions for that matter) to tenants, particularly when they are threatened by displacement.

For example, the District has a “first right to purchase” law where tenants have the right to match a third-party purchase contract on their buildings placed on the market for sale. Arlington and other Virginia jurisdictions would need state authorization to extend a similar right to Arlington tenants, and such authorization is unlikely. However, it might be possible to get an income tax incentive passed by the Virginia State Assembly and/or by the U.S. Congress that would give landlords a tax break if they sold their affordable housing properties to their tenants or to a non-profit development corporation. (In fact, just such an incentive, House Bill No. 1325, sponsored by Jim Almand, Bob Brink and Karen Darner, passed the House of Delegates on January 12, 2001, by a vote of 93 to 6, and is headed for the Virginia Senate.)

Beyond such legislative differences and initiatives, elected District officials and administrative staff are definitely more friendly to and supportive of tenant-sponsored conversions of properties to condominiums and cooperatives.

For example, a 200+ unit affordable housing property recently came up for sale in a gentrifying area of Northwest Washington. A developer, well known in the metro area and active in Arlington, subsequently placed a purchase contract on the property and is seeking tax-exempt bond financing and low-income housing tax credits to redevelop the property. The developer’s plan is to do minimal rehabilitation and keep

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*New Directions* is the newsletter of the Arlington New Directions Coalition (ANDC). ANDC reports on local news and presents formal ANDC positions. *New Directions* also publishes articles and opinion pieces consistent with ANDC’s mission and values concerning critical public issues in Arlington County.

Contact Charlie Rinker at (703) 243-5775 for more information about ANDC and/or Kit Johnston at [kitkat5@erols.com](mailto:kitkat5@erols.com) to be placed on the mailing list. Donations help defray printing and mailing costs, \$10 per year is suggested.

#### **Editorial Board**

Jack Cornman, Kit Johnston, Carlos Luna, Charlie Rinker, and Mary Rouleau.

## Community Self-Reliance Forum Held

Last May, the Arlington New Directions Coalition (ANDC) sponsored a public forum on how to achieve more community-friendly development in Arlington. In October, ANDC continued that dialogue by sponsoring an appearance at the Central Library by Michael Shuman, director of the Institute for Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship of the Village Foundation in Alexandria and author of *Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age*.

For Shuman, community self-reliance should be the goal of every community. At present, however, virtually every state and locality in the United States (including Arlington) is going in the opposite direction, hitching its future to large corporations with no ties to and usually no interest in the locality except for what money and other resources they can extract.

It's not surprising that we're in this situation: much staff time and money is spent at all levels of government trying to entice large multi-national corporations to states and localities. For example, Arlington has recently started to provide tax and other incentives to global technology companies to locate here. Among large commercial and residential real property developers, Arlington is beginning to have a reputation as "ripe for the picking," particularly in the absence of any particular local government interest in encouraging competition by more local private for-profit and non-profit companies that have long-lasting community roots.

Shuman maintains that because multinational corporations are so mobile — i.e., so able to move their facilities out of a given community to another one where wages are lower, environmental standards are more lax, or taxes are lower — they pose a threat to local communities. For one thing, they cause communities to experience a decline in both the quantity and quality of jobs. They also tend to impose heavy costs on governments when they move out (increased unemployment compensation and welfare benefits, increased failure of ancillary businesses that supply the multinational company) as well as extract "incentive" economic benefits from communities they move to. They displace some types of local business in the communities they move to and may weaken local culture with the spread of same brands, same retail outlets, and same stores, dulling residents' sense of place. They also undermine the capacity of communities to plan for the future because so much power shifts from communities and government to distant corporate managers.

State and local policies and physical development or government-funded infrastructure that focuses on serving local business and local resident households are often dismissed as no real alternative. But, in fact, these form the roots of development that is sustainable—development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the

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## Regional Report Finds Gaps Widening Between Rich and Poor Households

The Potomac Conference, a regional (suburban Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia) leadership forum formed by the Greater Washington Board of Trade in 1991, recently published its first Potomac Index "...to help measure the region's progress" in several areas, including Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Inclusion, Education, and Quality of Life. The result was a mixed picture, where the region generally received high marks for creation of new business, a more mixed review of education, and poorer marks for excluding some from the high tech driven economy and the quality of many aspects of life.

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### *Spotlight on Community Groups:* **Buyers and Renters Arlington Voice**

The mission of Buyers and Renters Arlington Voice (BRAVO), a coalition of some 15 organizations in Arlington, is to energize and mobilize low-income and minority tenants to be pro-active in addressing their housing needs. BRAVO also encourages the broader citizenry and County government to be pro-active in addressing the housing needs of its low-income and minority populations.

BRAVO notes that we "learned harshly from the Arna Valley experience that it is nearly impossible to change the plans of an unfriendly developer after a purchase contract has been signed and that, therefore, tenants must get ahead of the development curve to develop pro-active solutions."

BRAVO has an office and three part-time staff persons who work with tenants to solve problems and assist in the building of tenants associations. Volunteers are also working to create a database on the 200 plus affordable housing properties in the county. It is hoped that, with this information tenants will be able to work with owners to better repair and maintain their properties and, when a sale is pending, be in a position to buy, renovate, and preserve their units. This past year BRAVO helped tenants at the Patrick Henry Apts. get relocation payments they were entitled to but had not received when they were displaced from their apartments. At the Greenbrier Apts., BRAVO helped to bring the tenants' needs for repairs and improved maintenance to the attention of the property owners and managers, the Arlington Tenant-Landlord Commission and County code enforcement staff in order to get action on needed repairs.

Those interested in helping the work of BRAVO should call Cindie Pappas, at 703-750-2102, to volunteer their services. Tax deductible contributions can be made out to "Catholics for Housing-BRAVO Project" and sent to Catholics for Housing-BRAVO Project, 4600 King St., Alexandria, VA 22302.

# Arlington Community Groups Consider “Living Wage” Concept

By Marjorie McCreery

Led by the Arlington Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW)\*, representatives of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the Civic Coalition for Minority Affairs, the YMCA, and the Commission on the Status of Women met recently to explore what happens to families when the money they earn is insufficient to cover basic expenses and the possibly ameliorating concept of a “living wage.” Both pros and cons were heard.

## Setting the Stage

Keynote speaker Lauren Lavarovici introduced the concept of a living wage as the earnings level required for families to live in communities such as Arlington without subsidies for food, housing, medical care, transportation, or child care. She described the ultimately successful three-year-long effort in Alexandria to persuade the City Council to enact legislation requiring city contractors to provide a living wage for their employees. Beginning in October 2000, those doing business with the city must pay their employees \$9.84 per hour, nearly double the current federal minimum wage (pending review by the courts). If the living wage goes into effect, custodial workers, parking lot attendants, maintenance workers, and others will benefit from substantial increases.

**\*AAUW is a national organization of women college graduates, which advocates for equity in education and opportunities for girls and women.**

Lavarovici told of a worker who immediately quit his third job, giving him more time to be with his family.

Many groups in Alexandria joined together to bring the need for a living wage to the attention of the Council. The focused effort included recruiting interested groups, organizing marches and rallies, and intense lobbying of City Council members. Those groups then worked actively in the city elections for the issue and, last year, the ordinance passed.

## Another Point of View

AAUW Vice President for Membership, Arlene Wilson, an economist, took the stage to note that requiring higher wages may cause employers bidding for city contracts to reduce their workforce, reducing the number of low-skilled jobs available. She also noted that the cost of higher wages may be transferred to what the government pays for contracted goods and services and that this might cause taxes to increase. The community could lose out in a competitive environment if the cost of doing business caused firms to avoid locating in Alexandria or accepting business there.

## Arlington Statistics

AAUW Vice President for Programs, Marjorie McCreery, presented relevant statistics, including those reflecting Arlington County’s current demographics. The vast majority of Arlingtonians have exceptionally high median family and per capita incomes, but a number of Arlingtonians (seven percent or approximately 13,400 ) live in poverty (defined as a family of four living on less than

### ARLINGTON STATISTICS

- In 1996, the median family income in Arlington was \$68,885.
- In 1999, the per capita income in Arlington was \$41,708.
- In 1999, the median family income in the Washington Metropolitan area was \$78,900.
- In 1999, the median cost of a townhouse in Arlington was \$281,283, of a single-family house, \$291,684, and of a condominium or cooperative, \$137,100.
- Seven percent of Arlington’s population lives in poverty (families of four with incomes of \$16,655 or less).
- Students receiving free breakfast and lunch in the Arlington Public Schools: 5,429 of 18,900 students or 29%.
- Students receiving reduced price breakfast and lunch in the Arlington Public Schools: 1,845 of 18,900 students or 10% (families of four with incomes of \$31,543 or less)
- Percentage of Arlington elementary students receiving reduced price extended day services: 47% of 2000 students using afternoon extended day receive some subsidy (families of four with incomes of \$50,000 or less, with one child in the program).
- In 2000, Arlington Housing Grants were provided for 700 cases.
- Section 8 housing grants have been available in the past to families paying more than 30-40% of their incomes for housing; however, the waiting list is so long in Arlington that it has now been closed. (Eligible families are those with incomes of \$40,300 or less.)
- In Arlington, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which provides a maximum of \$354 per month for a family of three for up to two years, now serves 1,495 families.
- In Arlington, Women’s Infants and Children’s feeding programs served 6,680 clients last year.
- In Arlington, up to 5,000 children are eligible for the Children’s Medical Security Insurance Program for low-income families without health insurance.
- In Arlington, Medicaid served 5,420 clients last year.

## Wider Opportunities for Women 1998 Arlington Data

The hourly wage for a 40-hour workweek required to sustain a family without public assistance for food, housing, medical care, childcare, transportation, and taxes.

<i>ADULT(S)</i>	<i>CHILD(REN)</i>	<i>HOURLY WAGE</i>	<i>ANNUAL SALARY</i>
Two parents	Two children: One pre-school & one school-age	\$12.67 each adult	\$26,354 each adult
Two parents	One school-age child	\$9.74 each adult	\$20,259 each adult
One parent	One infant	\$15.97	\$33,218
One parent	One pre-school child	\$16.52	\$34,362
One parent	One school-age child	\$16.88	\$35,110
One parent	One teen-age child	\$10.08	\$20,966
One parent	Two pre-schoolers	\$22.51	\$46,072
One parent	Two school-age children	\$23.21	\$48,277
One parent	Three children	\$31.81	\$66,165

**\*From Wider Opportunities for Women. It was from statistics such as these that Alexandria decided to set its minimum wage.**

\$16,655 per year). Nearly 40 percent of students in Arlington public schools qualify for free or reduced price meals—another measure of income, since only certain incomes qualify. And nearly half of the students using the County’s extended day program of before-and after-school child care qualify for subsidies. Last year, Medicaid provided health services to 5,420 clients in Arlington, and the list of those waiting for Section 8 housing grants is so long (five years) that new applicants are no longer accepted. Arlington’s well-recognized high costs of housing—both owner-occupied and rental—place heavy pressures on families making less than 50 percent of the median income (now over \$78,000 in the Metro area). In some families, both parents work full-time and some have second and even third jobs but still cannot afford to live without assistance.

### *Participants Weigh In*

When the stage had been set, table groups formed to discuss the issues and how the citizens and government of Arlington might address them. Reporting out, one table concluded that low wages contribute to long working hours for parents and unsupervised children at home. Also noted was that some teen-agers work long hours to contribute to family incomes, which can have an adverse effect on school success. High housing costs also are known to force families into substandard housing, to double up with others, or to seek help through what are meant to be only temporary shelters. Other issues include families overusing credit and finding themselves in debt or bankrupt, families avoiding needed health care, and school-age family members dropping out to help.

Another group concluded that poverty and low wages disproportionately hurt women. Women tend to work in

occupations that pay less. Because they are usually the principal family caregiver, they lose income when the children are babies or are sick. Women also may stay in abusive marriages, concerned that they could not be financially independent. And when marriages or relationships dissolve, most often, it is the women who keep and care for the children, often without adequate child support.

The group noted that although Arlington has a broad range of “safety net” services for families and individuals in poverty – some offered by the government and the school system and many offered by private, non-profit, and faith-based organizations—the County is far from meeting the affordable housing demand, despite its many programs that seek to address at least parts of the problem.

Another table group identified many resources that Arlington families earning the median income of approximately \$70,000 can provide for their children that families earning less than a living wage probably can’t. These include spending quality time with their children; helping with homework and participating in school activities; providing a computer in the home and a variety of enriching extra-curricular activities, including travel; and ensuring that health care is available. Arlington students from families earning less than living wages often do without these and other benefits.

One table considered whether families would rather have adequate wages or the range of “safety net” services. They concluded that while the safety net is critical to ensuring that all children are cared for, parents would place higher value on having the ability to make their own decisions about managing their families.

Other discussions centered on the savings state and local government could realize if they could reduce some of their safety net services. These savings might, at least partially, offset the increased cost of living wage contracts.

### *What's Next?*

Participants in the discussions identified dozens of community organizations that might have an interest in this

future and, specifically, the ability of future generations in the locality to meet their needs. By contrast, policies and infrastructure that do not support the community in a sustainable way are left unexamined. Private development in particular is not subjected—and should be—to three critical questions, namely what will it produce, how, and where.

To ask *what* will be produced is important to a community's quality of life: is what would be produced what is needed? If not, why not? Is what would be produced harmful, like handguns, or additive, like tobacco, ecologically harmful, like waste products, or essentially useless, like pet rocks?

*How* what would be produced will be produced is a question that deals with, for example, the treatment of workers, the treatment of consumers, and the treatment of our ecosystems.

The *where* question reminds us that place is important. A business' civic ties to a community are critical to how it relates to that community. Just as, in personal life, the breakdown of personal ties to one another makes it easier not to care about the have-nots, to commit crimes against anonymous victims, and to retreat into walled subdivisions, the breakdown in community ties by businesses makes it easier for them to not care about the community in which they are located, to commit social and economic injustices against anonymous residents, and to shift their own social and environmental clean-up costs of production to the community. Local ownership by those with physical and social ties to the community (including resident- and worker-owned businesses, community corporations, and non-profit organizations, as well as more traditional private for-profit entrepreneurs and companies) accepts the environmental, labor, and quality-of-life standards of the community.

#### Locally owned businesses

- accept a lower economic rate of return than large multinationals and are much less likely to move from communities upon which they depend
- are much less short-term profit driven than multinational corporations
- are more concerned about long-term sustainability

issue, including churches, labor unions and other organized labor organizations, civic organizations, ethnic and cultural groups, women's groups, universities, affordable housing advocates, and service clubs.

Participants expressed interest in keeping the Arlington community informed about the needs of many of its residents, engaging other organizations in examining a living wage in Arlington, and reaching out to neighborhoods and collecting data to show the possible value of this concept.

- increase the local economic multiplier effect of the dollar and generate more than a dollar's worth of activity in the local community.

Government is an important beneficiary of this local economic multiplier in that its tax dollars are increased as the local dollar transactions cascade through the community. As the dollar moves around a community that has a variety of local ownership forms, income and wealth are redistributed locally, especially when compared to larger multinational forms of ownership, which further concentrate income and wealth into the hands of those who already have it.

Once it was thought that large multinational corporations can produce and sell products and services more cheaply than small companies because of certain economies of scale. Now economists and others, including certain industries (banking, food, and utilities, for example) realize that local production and distribution is less expensive, not more. In short, economies of scale are shrinking, in part due to transportation costs. In short, community self-reliance is not an impossible or impractical direction for local communities to consider and strive for.

Shuman then made the following recommendations for Arlington:

**Step 1)** The entire community (including its local business people) should participate in a series of community meetings in order to develop a statement of economic principles and practices for the community — a kind of “community bill of rights” reflecting the community's economic principles and practices. The statement would define what constitutes community-friendly business and consumer behavior, and it would be distributed to every household in the County. A broad-based committee of persons that represented all sectors and aspects of the Arlington community would collect data on Arlington businesses and each year award a “Good Community-Keeping Seal of Approval” to those businesses living up to the community bill of rights. This seal would then appear on goods, in store windows, and on stationery, influencing people's buying, banking, and investment decisions.

**Step 2)** The community should collect data about itself, its economic life, and the condition of its residents and workers and issue an annual “State of the County Report.”

- to assess any detrimental effects on the quality and quantity of service provided by the nonprofits in face of increased needs and flat or decreased funding over the past 10 years;

This report would reflect community indicators used to measure progress toward self-reliance, map the community's assets (both used and unused ), define the import dependencies of the community and the points of dollar-multiplier leakages, and define the subsidies the community provides to its businesses, community organizations, and residents and workers. Through the report, the County could see more clearly how self-reliant it is or is becoming or not. And the report could help with planning for greater self-reliance. For example, the report could highlight ripe business opportunities and suggest new markets for local business.

**Step 3)** As a part of the State of the County Report, there should be a systematic evaluation of how the County currently spends its economic development dollars and whether these dollars are going to locally-owned businesses or to export-driven businesses. Local-ownership and export-substitution could serve as basic criteria for spending every economic development dollar.

**Step 4)** Next, we could work within the community to set up community-friendly business schools for training local residents and workers in how to run a business, particularly with regard to the highest principles of charity and public service. Such training schools could be located in the high schools using adult continuing education curricula as well as in colleges and universities located in the County.

**Step 5)** Also needed are community-targeted credit institutions within the County to provide capital for starting and expanding community-friendly businesses. Existing banks could set up special banking divisions or accounts that invest locally and that encourage investment by civic-minded customers. A community credit union could make loans in the community, and a community development fund could be created in which no-interest loans were exchanged for equity shares in a financed local business. The pension funds of local businesses and local government could be encouraged to invest a portion of their funds into community-friendly businesses and development activities. Community development corporations owned by Arlingtonians could meet community needs other local entrepreneurs are not willing to meet.

The bottom line, according to Shuman, is that we need to engage in a devolution revolution, where we, as a locality, exercise real power over our local economy. And, according to Shuman, we don't need the state or federal government's money to do this; we just need them to get out of the way.

- to suggest ways the County can better meet the social service needs of a caring community, including the possibility of shifting more services, along with adequate funding, to nonprofit providers.

***Affordable Housing Principles Adopted by the County Board***

- 1) Affordable housing should be a County priority.
- 2) Market rate affordable housing should be the primary means of providing affordable housing. The County should continue to support efforts to maintain and preserve the supply of affordable housing and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- 3) A range of housing choices should be available throughout the County to accommodate households of all income levels, sizes, and need.
- 4) In providing housing assistance, priority should be targeted to the lowest-income households – low-income households with children and low income households with members who are elderly or have disabilities.
- 5) Affordable housing should be used to help prevent homelessness and promote a diverse community.
- 6) Equal housing opportunity should be a reality. Housing discrimination should not exist in Arlington.
- 7) Households with children should never be homeless.

***Affordable Housing Goals Adopted by the County Board***

- 1) Balance support for the elderly and persons with disabilities with a transitional safety net for working families with children.
- 2) Ensure through all available means that all housing in Arlington County is safe and decent.
- 3) Permit no net loss of committed affordable housing, and make every reasonable effort to maintain the supply of affordable market-rate housing.
- 4) Reduce the number of households in serious housing need (defined as those earning below 40% of median income who pay more than 40% of their income in rent).
- 5) Increase the number of housing units with two or more bedrooms in order to match the needs of households with children.
- 6) Distribute committed affordable housing within projects, within neighborhoods, and throughout the County.
- 7) Increase the rate of homeownership throughout the County, and increase homeownership opportunities for low-

and moderate-income households.

8) Ensure through all available means that housing discrimination is eliminated.

9) Provide housing services effectively and efficiently.

The Board also allocated \$500,000 in additional funding for the Arlington Housing Investment Fund (which housing advocates say is only a drop in the bucket). Members also adopted a few other time-sensitive affordable housing initiatives in order to prepare for the current session of the Virginia General Assembly or to request further work from County staff, including

\* seeking state-enabling legislation to allow the County to modify its existing affordable housing bonus density provisions to further encourage developers to provide affordable housing in return for bonus density

\* development by County staff of local ordinance options to provide financial incentives to property owners and developers to preserve and rehabilitate existing affordable housing units

\* development by County staff of options for developers to provide on-site affordable housing or larger contributions to the Housing Reserve Fund. (Under existing fund contribution requirements, developers have no incentive to provide on-site affordable housing units. The initiative is aimed at correcting this by raising required fund contribution levels and further encouraging on-site affordable housing development.)

\* development by County staff of a zoning ordinance amendment aimed at encouraging development of larger family-sized units by allowing third bedrooms in addition to the base housing unit density; also developers would be given the option to apply to build apartments on a units-per-acre basis.

\* development by County staff of a proposal for a housing needs survey in FY 2001 to facilitate understanding and assessment of the County's affordable housing needs.

### ***Next Steps: ANDC's Point of View***

How staff responds to the Board's request for implementation tools for the goals spelled out above is critical. ANDC and other affordable housing advocates have made many suggestions for implementation. These include modifications to

#### **1) Zoning and Land Use**

a) Enact an amendment to the existing county Special Affordable Housing Protection District (SAHPD) ordinance that would expand its use beyond the Rosslyn-Ballston (R-B) corridor. The amendment would expand the SAHPD ordinance to the County's other major transportation corridors

and surrounding neighborhoods and would require a 50% (or 1:2) replacement policy for affordable housing units rather than the 1:1 replacement currently called for in the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. Such an ordinance amendment would encourage preservation, communicate to developers and residential property owners that the County intends to preserve existing affordable housing in site plan projects, and allow developers and property owners to work within the lower densities allowed in the General Land Use Plan along these other transportation corridors.

b) Adopt an inclusionary zoning or affordable dwelling units (ADU) ordinance that would require developers of 50 or more new residential units to provide at least 12.5% of their total units as affordable or pursue changes in Arlington's current bonus density ordinances to be able to use bonus density for market-rate units as well as affordable housing units (the so-called "split bonus" approach). (State-enabling legislation already exists for an ADU ordinance, although it needs to be expanded to cover high-rises, something other Northern Virginia jurisdictions are already working on. Arlington's current bonus density ordinances require that all of the bonus density be used for affordable housing; and developers claim they lose money in developing only affordable units and thus have little or no incentive to develop affordable units in return for bonus density. Arlington may want to have both an ADU ordinance and these amendments to existing ordinances to expand its affordable housing tools.)

c) Expand the transfer of density and development rights from one site to another to non-contiguous parcels within transfer districts established by the County Board, provided that at least 20% of the units being built are affordable. (This may require state-enabling legislation, which might be difficult to get.)

d) Require as a part of the site plan application process a "housing impact" statement for residential development projects over 20 units and for large commercial projects. In residential projects, the housing impact statement would primarily measure housing displacement impact and document where the project's existing resident households would go and how the developer plans to keep displacement to less than 20%. In large commercial projects, the housing impact statement would be similar to environmental impact and transportation impact statements and would concentrate on where workers in the proposed projects would live and how they would commute to their jobs. (Such site plan submissions would encourage developers to focus on the negative impacts of their plans on existing residents and neighborhoods and give citizen review panels a better idea of the housing and human aspects of the proposed developments.)

2) **The County's Financial Resources** The County's housing resources have recently been improved. However, additional financial commitment is needed for retention and

development of affordable rental units because the private redevelopment market is not taking on the task.

a) Budget at least \$4,000,000 from county general revenue annually to fund the Affordable Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) for use in providing below-market-interest-rate, subordinated financing, and/or equity grants to homeownership and rental affordable housing projects. This amount would renew an earlier County Board policy to set aside 2% of County revenue for affordable housing development. (What began in the late 1980s as a \$2,000,000 annual contribution was reduced each year in the mid-1990s until two years ago the County was only funding \$800,000 from its own revenues.) This money is needed primarily to support non-profit housing development, and such development projects should be given a priority claim on these funds.

b) Use the County's strong credit standing to pledge backing for lower interest rates for the financing of affordable housing by non-profit developers, including tenant-sponsored cooperatives and condominiums. The County could establish an annual cap consistent with its ability to maintain a strong bond rating and budget reserves to support these pledges. (This mechanism was used by the County to assist in financing Woodbury Park and helped keep interest rates between 3% to 5%, which helped make the project's rehabbed units affordable to low-income households.)

c) Use the County's banking deposits and fund balances to leverage private sector lenders to participate in affordable housing lending; as well as use a portion of County employee pension funds to finance affordable housing.

### **3) Tenant Protections and Tenant Support/Empowerment**

a) Strengthen housing code enforcement in all County market rate rental housing by adding inspectors for more and more systematic housing code enforcement. Also develop pro-active programs for landlords and tenants to work together to improve housing conditions. (As Arlington's affordable properties get older—many were built in the 1940s and 1950s—and as vacancy rates plummet due to demand, tenants become more vulnerable and more pro-active housing code enforcement becomes even more necessary.)

b) Provide active support to tenant rights education programs and for non-profits that work with tenants. In the past, County staff worked more closely with non-profits that educate and otherwise assist tenants. That cooperation should be reinstated in a more pro-active way.

c) Actively support tenant-sponsored conversions of apartment buildings to housing cooperatives and condominiums. The County Board must communicate to County staff and the wider community that it values low-income and minority homeownership efforts in multi-family rental properties, that it supports tenant-sponsored cooperatives and

condominiums, and that it expects some of the County's housing resources to be used to support such conversions. The County should provide technical and financial assistance for such conversions. It should let property owners know that the County encourages such conversions when they are ready to sell their properties. It should work for state and federal tax incentives that encourage landlords to sell their properties to their tenants. The County's Moderate Income Purchase Assistance Program (MIPAP) should be expanded to cover housing cooperatives as well as single-family and condominium homes.

### **4) Fair Housing**

a) Set up a fair housing office to work on fair housing education and testing/enforcement.

b) Conduct more testing for housing discrimination in both rental and sales housing in the County, as well as in mortgage lending until the housing discrimination that exists in Arlington drops significantly.

5) **Homeless Services** (The number of homeless people in Arlington, as elsewhere, has been growing among the working poor who cannot afford the high cost of housing as well as among chronic homeless who have substance abuse problems, mental illness, and other factors that contribute to their homelessness.)

a) Increase housing options for homeless families with children so the number of such families decreases by one-third each year.

b) Set aside funds to provide single room occupancy units for single homeless men and women. The need for inexpensive SRO housing is tremendous in Arlington. SRO's would get a number of homeless persons off the streets and into decent and safe housing.

### **6) Administration of County Housing Programs**

a) The County's affordable housing development staff and activities belong in the housing department, not the department of economic development. Current placement of affordable housing staff dilutes and weakens the County's response to housing development issues in residential projects. It focuses staff attention on issues other than the residents of the property who are facing a housing crisis.

b) Provide greater funding to non-profit organizations for provision of affordable housing units and services to increase efficient service delivery and stretch scarce public funds. Over the last decade, most of the County's funding for non-profit housing providers has remained flat or actually decreased in the face of inflation.

This relatively small, elite group succeeded in dominating Arlington elected politics and processes of citizen participation for many years and, in many ways, Arlington is better for it. The group wasn't particularly inclusive in its early days: People have laughingly said that 20 years ago, if you didn't live in the 07 zip code, you didn't count. Blacks in Arlington never felt part of any variation of the Arlington Way nor did poor whites (in those days often referred to as the Cherrydale red necks).

Has any of that really changed? Not really. Except that, today, those who aren't really part of the Arlington Way glaringly include the elderly (particularly the poor elderly), the disabled (particularly the poor disabled), the poor in general, African Americans, Latinos and recent immigrants. At a time of massive development and redevelopment on virtually every one of the County's major transportation corridors, these Arlingtonians who comprise a larger and larger proportion of the population are being pushed to the edge and, in some cases, pushed out.

Is this good for Arlington? Not even many of the old Arlington Way elite who, in their own way, in the old days, fought for a responsive and fair school system and affordable housing would conclude that it is. Yet the County continues to do business as if we all had a similar vision of Arlington—perhaps of an economically uniform jurisdiction populated by self-sufficient singles and workers and dominated by luxury high rises and expensive single family houses.

### ***Columbia Pike: A Case in Point***

Despite over a year of discussions with members of the County Board and County staff, the Columbia Pike planning process continues not to consider as priorities the critical issues of housing, education, employment, and public facilities/services for current and future residents and workers on the Pike. At the behest of the County Board, only economic and commercial development, transportation, and parks are formally discussed, despite the fact that at the very first Pike planning meeting, west Columbia Pike residents overwhelmingly stated that more affordable housing and expanded public facilities/services were their two highest priorities. .

the small dwelling units that already exist in the property. Meanwhile the current tenants have organized and hired technical assistance providers to help them buy the property, also using tax-exempt bond financing and low-income housing tax credits. The tenants' plan includes more substantial rehab as well as reconfiguring the units to create some larger units to meet the needs of the larger resident families who will otherwise be displaced.

Importantly, the reaction in the District government has

I asked a County official to explain why the County would take such a stance. This person replied that this is just the way Arlington does things; i.e., planning means land use planning. I asked why planning doesn't focus on people (who we want to live in, work in, shop in, and visit the community) and use land use and zoning as strategies that serve people. The official said that was another way of looking at planning, but not the way Arlington looks at planning. I asked whether emphasizing land-use planning favored certain interests and not others, such as home and business property owners, not home and business renters. The answer was "yes." I asked whether the process was biased against the poor, minorities, and immigrants when these groups form the majority of renters. Again, the answer was "yes." When I asked whether a process that focused on land-use planning was discriminatory, there was no affirmative response. This is the Arlington Way.

### ***A New, More Inclusive Vision of Arlington Needed—and New Officials***

Today, most of the County's elected and citizen policy makers do not know many Arlingtonians who are poor or are tenants, immigrants, or minorities. Certainly, the County does not seek to include them in the policy-making process. Moreover, the guiding structure, and possible even the guiding ideology, is biased against these groups and interests and toward groups that often work against the interests of the poor, the tenant, the immigrant, and the minority. If this is the case, tinkering with The Arlington Way by calling more meetings or providing more language translation, for example, is doomed to failure. Rather, major political change is needed—to define a new, more inclusive vision for Arlington, to revise the processes of government, and to elect officials who support the new vision and processes.

I would like to conclude with a quote from historian Robert Wiebe. He was writing about the Progressives a century ago, but I think he captures the essence of the Arlington Way. Wiebe said, "If most Progressives did not set out to keep the poor from the polls, they had little invested in bringing them there. Reforms that originated in a desire to make governments more responsive to people's needs ended up making them less responsive to people's voices."

been to evaluate the tenants' proposal on a par with the developer's proposal. In fact, because the tenants association proposal better meets the needs of the property's residents (in terms of rehab scope of work, reconfiguration of units, and minimization of displacement), the tenants association proposal is receiving more favorable treatment by City officials and appears likely to be approved.

From experience, I can easily imagine a similar situation in Arlington. First, the tenants would not be viewed as qualified (even with professional technical assistance provid-

### *Inclusion Factors Measured*

In the 40-page report, Inclusion, as a strategic goal, seeks to “Foster a climate in which everyone has a chance to participate in the region’s prosperity and civic life...ensur[ing] a role, interest, and shared responsibility for all residents in the region’s future.” Inclusion factors measured included Household Income [HI] Distribution, Housing Purchase Affordability (or Opportunity [HOI]), and Public Leadership Diversity.

### *Inclusion Findings*

- **While the middle and top 20<sup>th</sup> percentile experienced an overall increase in HI from 1993-98, the bottom 20% lost ground.** The income gap between the wealthiest 20% and the poorest 20% of households widened from a ratio of 3 to 1 to a ratio of 4 to 1. Median HI in 1998 in the region was \$75,953, a steady increase.
- When the report measured the percentage of homes affordable to families earning the median HI, it found that the regional HOI rose from 66% in 1992 to 79% in 1999. However, the report also points out that 35% of renters in the District of Columbia are unable to afford the “fair market rent” of \$820 for a two-bedroom apartment. **A worker earning the federal minimum wage (\$5.15/hr.) would have to work 122 hours a week to afford a fair market rent on a two-bedroom unit in this area.**
- In 1999, 8% of county elected officials in the region were African American, Asian, or Hispanic, compared to 18%

of city elected officials, whereas African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics made up 42% of the region’s population.

### *Education*

- While the region leads the nation in post-secondary college degrees, in some areas, the percentage of high-school dropouts is increasing.

### *Quality of Life*

- The region is now third in the nation (behind Los Angeles and Houston) in concentrations of ozone, an air pollutant formed primarily by automobile and truck exhaust.
- The region now leads the nation in traffic delays (62 hours average per driver per year).
- Tree coverage in the region has fallen below the 40 percent level recommended for healthy urban ecosystems

### *The Potomac Index is designed*

- to focus the region - encompassing 5,000 square miles, 21 political jurisdictions and 5.2 million people — on a set of quantitative indicators to track progress over time;
- to communicate information about the region’s progress in realizing its commitments on a regular basis;
- to spotlight key issues of concern that affect the region’s future; and
- to build a regional identity that fosters commitment, collaboration, and ongoing communication.

The full report and executive summary can be found at [www.PotomacConference.org](http://www.PotomacConference.org).

ers assisting) to put such a proposal forward and, therefore, their proposal would not be taken seriously. In addition, although the District doesn’t seem to automatically grant private developers preference due to greater financial clout or resources, in Arlington, such preference is pretty much guaranteed.

In the District, the need to make renter residents more self-sufficient first through empowerment and then through homeownership seems to be readily understood. Such a goal could be realized in Arlington, too, if elected officials and

County staff were truly interested and supportive. Specifically, in Arlington, we need to take concrete steps to support affordable housing property purchases and homeownership by local residents by empowering our low-income and moderate-income tenants to form associations and seek funding, and by giving private property owners incentives to do the right thing.

**Arlington New Directions Coalition**  
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**Announcements:**

1. "To get on ANDC's e-mail list serve for timely notice of ANDC and County meetings, please contact [RouleauMary@gateway.net](mailto:RouleauMary@gateway.net).

2. Reminder to our Contributors: ANDC received 501c3 status effective last January 18, 2000. If you need confirmation from ANDC about contributions on or after that date, please contact ANDC Treasurer Mary Rackmales at [rackmary@erols.com](mailto:rackmary@erols.com) or 874 N. Jacksonville St, 22205.

3. We are pleased to announce a \$10,000 grant from the FreddieMac Foundation to help fund during 2001 our newsletters and upcoming web site. We are grateful for their support, but we still need yours!

Please send contributions to:

ANDC Treasurer Mary Rackmales

874 N. Jacksonville, Arlington, VA 22205.