Virginia Beach Housing Study Update

Virginia Center for Housing Research

HousingForward Virginia

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Term

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## Table

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## Images

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| HousingForward Virginia logo |

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| Figure 1: Annual LIHTC production from 1985 to 2019 |

# Executive summary

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# Preface

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# 1. Data and methodological notes

## 1.1 Quantitative analysis

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## 1.2 Qualitative analysis

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# 2. Current housing efforts

The City of Virginia Beach currently promotes housing affordability both directly and through partner organizations using City, state, and federal funds.

## 2.1 VBCDC

The Virginia Beach Community Development Corporation (VBCDC), a non-profit organization created by the City Council in 1985, is the largest developer and operator of affordable housing in Virginia Beach. It owns and operates over 500 scattered site affordable housing units and provides rental assistance, homelessness prevention services, and supportive housing for veterans.

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| VBCDC won the BEST AFFORDABLE HOUSING, ENERGY CONSERVATION EFFORT award at the 2010 Virginia Governor’s Housing Conference for Beach Park West Apartments. The ten-unit community serves special-needs residents and was built to EarthCraft standards for sustainability and energy efficiency. Photo: GMF + ASSOCIATES. |

The VBCDC has close links to the City: the City Council appoints its Board of Directors and provides funding and policy direction, and it frequently coordinates with the City Departments of Housing and Neighborhood Preservation and of Human Services.

While VBCDC’s major focus is on permanent rental housing, it has also administered low-income homeownership programs and developed single-family units for sale to low-income owners. Since the mid-2010s, the City has stopped providing direct funding for VBCDC’s operations and administration, but it continues to provide federal pass-through funds.

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| Learn more |
| The [VBCDC website](https://www.vbcdc.org/) has additional information on their mission, administration, and services. |

## 2.2 Funding

The City also partners with other non-profit and for-profit low-income housing developers and operators, distributing HOME and CDBG funds via Housing Opportunity Funds Requests for Proposals issued at least once per year. Since 2000, the City has provided $10.1 million in federal pass-through funds and $5.3 million of City funds to partner organizations, creating 1,280 affordable rental units, preserving 413 affordable rental units, and providing 309 rental assistance vouchers.

## 2.3 Development incentives

In addition to pass-through funds for developers and operators, the City provides other assistance, such as facilitating land transactions, and funding infrastructure improvements to enable affordable housing development. Zoning and land use tools have also been used to encourage and incentivize affordable housing development. These include reduced parking requirements for affordable housing sites, increased density allowances in Strategic Growth Areas, limited approval of single room occupancy (SRO) housing, and a voluntary Workforce Housing program offering density bonuses in exchange for workforce-affordable set-aside units.

## 2.4 Housing Resource Center

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| Along with housing and supportive services, the HRC also includes a cafeteria and learning facilities. Photo: S.B. Ballard Construction Company. |

Finally, the Housing Resource Center, developed with $32 million in City funds, provides emergency housing for unsheltered families and individuals, and services for households experiencing a housing crisis, as well as 29 permanent supportive housing units.

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| Learn more |
| The [HRC website](https://housing.virginiabeach.gov/ending-homelessness/housing-resource-center) has a full list of resources and services provided on site. |

# 3. Overview

This section proposes and describes eight different policy and programmatic recommendations for the City to pursue as part of its efforts to address housing affordability and opportunity.

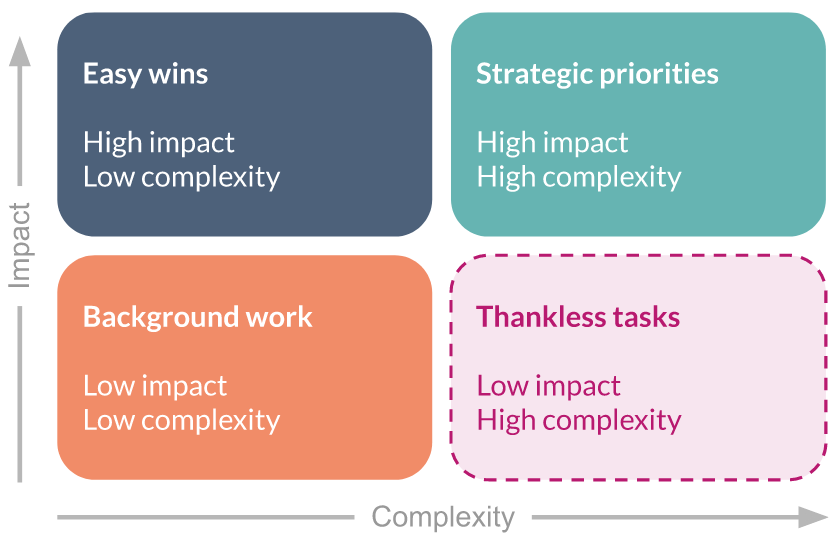
The recommendations are based on VCHR’s analysis of housing needs in the City, VCHR’s engagement with community members, and conversations with City Council and City staff. They also incorporate input from City Council at two working sessions between August and September.

Solutions are organized into three categories:

* **Strategic priorities** that build the City’s capacity to make significant strides, but may require substantial planning and investment.
* **Easy wins** that require fewer decision points and could demonstrate meaningful success in the near future.
* **Background work** activities that take advantage of ongoing or upcoming efforts to improve the City’s planning, regulatory, and operational approaches to housing.

## 3.1 Policy matrix

To help evaluate and prioritize housing policy strategies, Virginia Beach can use a matrix like the one below. Relative to one another, proposals are ranked according to their expected positive impact and their complexity (or level of effort) to implement.



Each strategy then falls into one of these categories:

**Strategic priorities**

* Focused activities that require more effort but have the biggest payoff.
* Build long-term capacity to address housing needs.
* Provide opportunity for City to innovate and lead among peers.

**Easy wins**

* Simple tasks to begin soon that do not require as much work but still result in meaningful progress.
* Fewer decision points required, but some may involve novel funding or policy choices.
* Build on clear, proven examples of success.
* Take advantage of existing infrastructure without much need for additional capacity.

**Background work**

* Activities that require additional homework but can likely be completed within current or future planning efforts.
* Long-term objectives to migrate day-to-day City operations to support its housing goals.

**Thankless tasks**

* Not advisable; revise or abandon tasks in the future if they begin to meet this criteria.

## 3.2 Policy rankings

Based on these criteria, these are the rankings for the eight solutions.

**Strategic priorities**

* Develop a City-managed Housing Trust Fund
* Use Virginia Beach Development Authority to fund new large-scale, mixed-use development projects
* Design and incorporate a housing education campaign into successful community engagement efforts

**Easy wins**

* Create a Housing Assistance Fund for workers
* Leverage Virginia Statewide Community Land Trust to create permanent affordable homeownership opportunities

**Background work**

* Pursue innovative self-sustaining mixed-income, mixed-use rental development options
* Research opportunities to simplify and streamline the permitting and review processes
* Consider an advisory board to guide the development of new zoning ordinance changes *and* assess options for redesigning the Workforce Housing Program to increase its impact

# References

Last, First X. 2023. “Title.” *Journal* 12 (3): 45–67. <https://doi.org/10.1093/comjnl/27.2.97>.

# Appendix A — Public and expert engagement

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1. I’m the footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)